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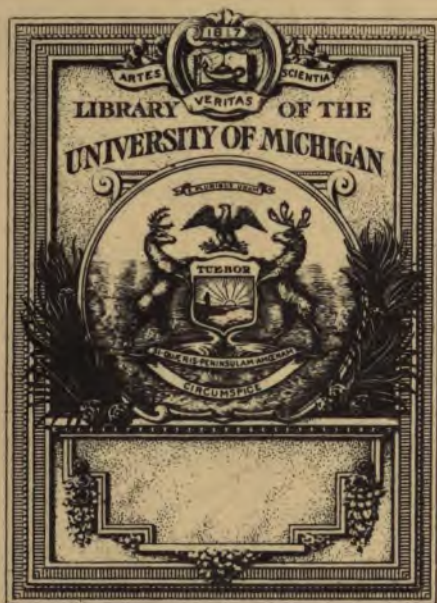
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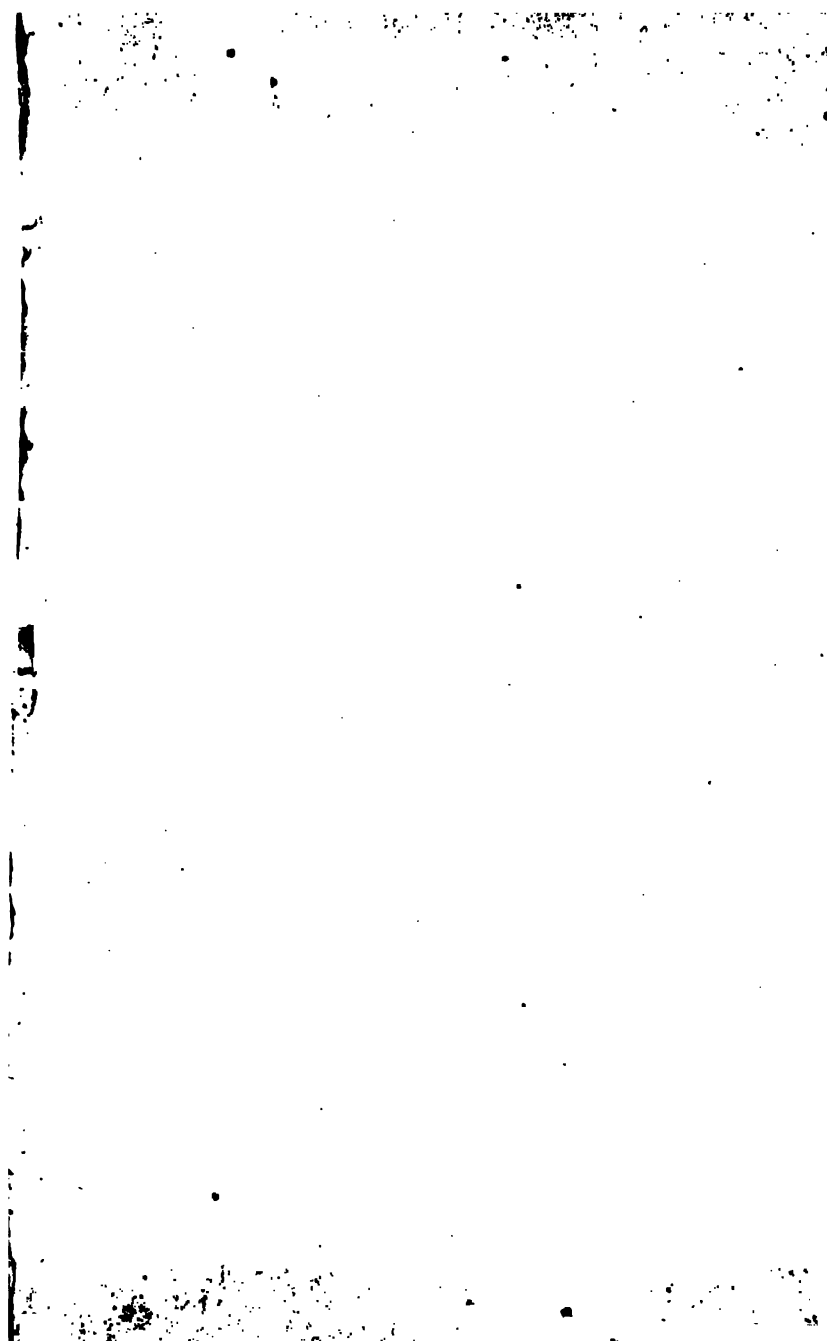
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A Clear and Comprehensive

V I E W

OF THE

*Being, Nature, and Attributes*

OF

G O D,

FORMED

Not only upon the Divine Authority of  
The HOLY SCRIPTURES, but the  
solid Reasonings and Testimonies of the Best  
AUTHORS, both HEATHEN and CHRISTIAN,  
which have writ upon the Subject.

WITH

Practical Inferences, Remarks, and Exhortations,  
for the more effectual Revival of true Piety and  
Religion, which in this degenerate Age of Infidelity  
and Licentiousness, is but too much wanted.

---

The SECOND EDITION, with Large ADDITIONS.

---

By JOSEPH SMITH, D. D.

Provost of Queen's College, Oxon; Prebendary of  
St. Paul's; and Rector of St. Dionys, London.

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*He that cometh to GOD must believe that HE is, and that HE is  
the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Heb. xi. 6.*

---

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M.DCC.LVI.

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1756

TO THEIR  
**Royal Highnesses**  
**G E O R G E**  
PRINCE of WALES,  
AND  
PRINCE EDWARD,  
HIS ROYAL BROTHER,

THIS COMPENDIOUS SUMMARY  
OF THE  
CHRISTIAN RELIGION,  
BOTH WITH REGARD TO  
FAITH AND PRACTICE,  
IS WITH ALL HUMILITY,  
DEVOTED AND INSCRIBED,  
BY THEIR MOST DUTIFUL  
AND  
MOST OBEDIENT SERVANT,

JOSEPH SMITH

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T H E  
P R E F A C E.



O give some Satisfaction to the candid Reader, concerning the Motives that induced me to put these Lectures into the Press, there are two material Questions, that may reasonably be made, which I think myself obliged, before I enter upon them, to give proper Answers to in my own Vindication.

*First*, “ What Occasion there is to  
“ trouble the Publick with a Treatise on  
“ this Divine Subject, which has from  
a “ time



ii      The P R E F A C E.

“ time to time been so accurately and  
“ copiously handled by much abler Pens,  
“ that there is nothing New to be said, or  
“ writ upon it; especially in so narrow a  
“ Compass as it is here reduced to?”

The best Apology I have to offer for this is, that I am but too sensible of my own Deficiency in both these Respects, and that I fall far short of the Great Men that have gone before me in the Copiousness of the Matter, as well as the Elegance and Politeness of the Style, which I pretend not to vie with them in. But, as I have omitted nothing of Importance that came within my Reach, either with Regard to the Arguments themselves, or the Solutions of the Objections urged under the several Heads here treated of; so I cannot but persuade myself, that the shorter they are, the more easily and thoroughly they will be perused by the Generality of Readers, and the more likely, therefore, to be remembered, and reduced to Practice,  
than

The P R E F A C E.      iii

than when dilated and swelled into Volumes  
of a larger Size.

*Secondly*, “ The next Question that arises from this is, that, if they are designed for the General Use and Benefit of the Community, Why should they be composed in the Scholastick Way of Writing, expressed in the Metaphysical Terms and Distinctions, and intermixed with *Greek* and *Latin* Sentences from the Ancient Moralists, which the greatest Part of the Vulgar Readers are quite Strangers to, and can be but little profited by ?”

In answer to this I beg Leave to observe, that having originally taken my Plan from Bishop WILKINS’s *Principles of Natural Religion*, where the greatest Part of those Quotations occur, (as properly suited to the Audience they were first addressed to) I was unwilling to drop them on this Occasion; BEING inclined to believe that as there

#### iv      The P R E F A C E.

is nothing in the whole Composition below the Curiosity of Persons of the first Rank in Point of Learning and Abilities to employ their Thoughts upon ; So neither is there any Thing so far above the Capacities of the Other, (as to the main Drift and Substance of what is offered upon each Head) but what, by the Help of the Explications there given of them, may be readily understood, and applied to the best Advantage. So that they cannot well fail, if read with Care and Attention, to have a good Effect upon Both.

The Former, whose Inclinations have led them more to the Study of Classsical Learning, than that of the Holy Scriptures, may here be agreeably entertained in their own Way, by having their Memories refreshed, and their Judgments confirmed in the Principles they had before imbibed ; and the latter more convincingly edified and established in Theirs, out of mere Shame to be outdone by the very  
Heathens

## The P R E F A C E. ▼

Heathens in the Moral Duties of Religion, which Natural Reason, with the Superstructure of Divine Revelation, more indispensibly obliges them to pay to the Almighty Redeemer, as well as Creator and Governor of the World.

In all which Respects, as 'tis doubtless a Subject of the greatest Importance to be rightly understood and considered by all Ranks and Degrees of Men among us; so it cannot but be allowd, that the more different Lights it is set and viewed in, the more likely it is to answer that Purpose: And all, I fear, but too little to stem the over-bearing Torrent of Infidelity, Impiety, and Licentiousness of every Kind, which has of late, more than ever, been flowing in upon us, and which, if a timely Stop be not put to it, must inevitably bring down the Divine Judgments on our Heads.

To avert this Impending Danger, the most effectual Way that can be thought of,  
is

**vi      The P R E F A C E.**

is to unite in our Joint Endeavours, to sow the salutary Seeds of this Divine Faith and Knowledge in the Hearts of all under our immediate Care and Charge; But more especially those of tender Years, who are naturally more susceptible of loose and vicious Impressions, and consequently more liable to be seduced and corrupted by those bold Abettors of Atheistical Principles, that are every where advancing, and gaining Ground in their Attacks.—It was this Consideration chiefly, which first moved me to draw up this Compendious Summary, as a proper Preservative against them, without any Design at that Time of troubling the Publick with it.

It has lain by me for several Years, and would have done so still, if I had not been induced to commit it to the Press by the pleasing Prospect I had in View, of contributing my Mite towards the Instilling the fundamental Principles of the Christian Religion, into the Minds of our Growing Youth

## The P R E F A C E.      vii

Youth in the publick Schools, and Universities, and other Seminaries of Education elsewhere; As being the most likely Means, in my Opinion, to prevent the further Spreading of Infidelity in the next Age, though it seems, I fear, to have taken too deep Root amongst us to hope for a present Suppression of it in this.

'Tis there the Ground-work of Reformation, in Point of Principles, as well as Practice, must be laid. And from thence it must be derived, as 'tis to be hoped in due Time it will, to answer that desired Effect. But whatever the Success be, I have discharged what I thought my Duty, and leave the Rest to the Divine Disposal, on whose Grace and Providence alone the final Issue of it depends.

All I have farther to advertise the Reader of is, that I have subjoined to these Lectures a Dissertation yet more Practicall and Perswasive, on the great Necessity and Importance

viii      The P R E F A C E.

portance of Divine Wisdom and Knowledge in general, as it conduces, above all others, not only to advance the Dignity and Perfection of our Rational Nature, but to promote and secure our Temporal as well as Spiritual Happiness, both in this World and the next.—To which I have likewise added, an earnest Exhortation, more particularly addressed to the Deists and Freethinkers of the present Age, to forewarn them of the apparent Dangers they expose themselves to by the Libertine Principles they seem to value themselves upon; To set before them the irreparable Mischiefs they do to the Civil, no less than the Ecclesiastical State in that Respect; and by the most prevalent and engaging Arguments I could urge in so narrow a Compass, to bring them to a better Sense of the Divine Authority and Perfection of that Holy Religion they are taking so much Pains to undermine and oppose.

## POSTSCRIPT. ix

*The favourable Reception this Book has met with from the Publick, notwithstanding the Discouragements generally complained of in the Disposal of Religious Treatises of this sort, and the many Errors and Mistakes in the first Impression, cannot but be construed as a sufficient Motive in both those Respects to induce me to publish a Second Edition of it.*

*But there is yet another Motive much more Pressing and Important than these, which I think myself obliged to apprize my Readers of;—viz. “That the first Edition being only a Sketch of what was farther intended to be enlarged upon in case it met with a favourable Reception (as indeed it has done beyond what I expected) I was much entreated and encouraged by two or three particular Friends to publish it under my own Name;—with such Additions, Alterations, and Improvements in the several distinct Tracts,*



## ❧ P O S T S C R I P T.

*and Branches of which it consists, as I thought would best answer the most Extensive, Useful and Edifying Purposes I proposed to the Publick by it.—The Particulars of which I am inclined to hope will likewise be well received, tho' I am but too sensible of the Occasion there will still be to bespeak their Candour in the favourable Perusal of them.*


N. B. That the first Sheet of the *Preliminary Dissertation* was by Mistake printed off without the Running Title, which the Readers are desir'd to excuse.





A  
Preliminary Dissertation  
In DEFENCE of the  
**HOLY SCRIPTURES**  
AGAINST  
INFIDELS and FREETHINKERS  
of all Denominations,

With Proper Rules and Directions necessary for the  
Right Use and Application of them.

 **H**AT the Knowledge of  
God, as it implies a firm  
Belief in Him, is the Per-  
fection of our Nature and Eter-  
nal Life the ultimate End of it, is  
a Principle which every Man, that  
is blessed with the true Use of his  
Reason, and believes his Soul to be  
A                      Immortal

Immortal, must necessarily yield a ready Assent to. For, as the *Understanding* is properly a Faculty of *knowing*, and the *Will* of *desiring*, and the Choice of the one depends upon the Judgment of the other; so the utmost Perfection they are respectively capable of, must consist in the Attainment of such a Knowledge as leads us to the Enjoyment of the *greatest Good*.

'Tis this Knowledge alone, as the wisest of Men has told us, that *enlightens the Eyes, and converts the Soul; that gives to our Heads a Crown of Glory, and to our Hearts an Ornament of Grace*: 'Tis this that enobles and embellishes our Nature, raises us to a nearer Resemblance with God; and infuses into our Minds a due Notion of our Obligation on that Principle to worship and obey Him,

ac-

according to those Revelations he has vouchsafed us of Himself, and the Laws and Rules he has prescribed us to walk by.

Without this, the other Sort of Knowledge, which we call Human, is only a Compound of Error and Ignorance, which being destitute of Light and Assistance from Heaven, dwells only upon the Surface and Shadows of divine Truth, which soars too high above the Reach of our Reason to come at. 'Tis at best but a specious and imaginary Sort of Amusement, which (as the Apostle St. *Paul* observes) *puffs up, but does not edify*. It fills Men's Minds with Pride and Self-conceit, and makes them so far Idolaters to the Oracle of *Human Reason*, that they think themselves too wise to submit to, or be guided by the Oracles of *God's*  
A 2
*Word,*

*Word*, and so either turn Infidels, and run down all Revelation as Imposture, or fall into the Extravagance of Heresy or Enthusiasm, which are no less dangerous.

The many deplorable Instances we have, in the present loose Age, of Persons who thus *make Shipwreck of their Faith*, and endeavour to pervert and corrupt the Faith of others, make Dissertations of this Nature from the Press, as well as the Pulpit, but too necessary to be insisted on. And that, not only because 'tis of all others the most Spiritual and Sublime, and therefore not to be expressed in such plain and familiar Language, as the more practical Doctrines of Christianity are; but because 'tis the principal Foundation upon which all the rest are built, and the previous Condition absolutely required in Scripture

ture

ture to entitle us to a gracious Access to, and Acceptance with the Divine Being, either in this World, or the next.

It must indeed be owned, that the vast Extent of this Subject, and the Immense Distance and Disproportion there is between the Infinity and Omniscience of the Divine Nature, and the finite Scantiness and Ignorance of our own, puts it beyond our Power, on this Side Heaven, to come to an adequate Conception of it. But since God has been pleased to supply that Defect by the clear Revelations vouchsafed us of himself in the Sacred Scriptures, *which testify of him* : It must likewise be owned, that, however Difficult and Discouraging this Knowledge may appear at first View to the Weak, and Indolent, and Licitious

tious Part of the Christian World, it can by no Means be pleaded as an Excuse for the Neglect of their best Endeavours to search into, and attain it.

'Tis a Condition upon which *their* Eternal *Safety* and *Interest* depend, which to Creatures endued with Reason (if they would exercise it, as it highly behoves them to do) is a Point of such Weight and Importance, as will not suffer them, without wilful Blindness and Incogitancy to be supinely careless or indifferent in it; having but too much Reason to fear, that they will otherwise stand self-condemned and inexcusable for that Neglect.

Their Contempt and Disregard of what God has there revealed, will provoke him to give them up to the wild, pernicious Conjectures and Imaginations

ginations of their own corrupt Hearts; and consequently to the Delusions of that *Spirit of Darkneſs*, whoſe chief Delight and Ambition is to *lead them Captive at his Will*.

The only plausible Plea they have to buoy up themſelves with, is a pretended Inability in Point of Underſtanding for ſo difficult and ſublime a Taſk; and ſome Caſes, no Doubt there are, where it may equitably be claimed and admitted of, to ſuch a Degree at leaſt, as Reaſon and Conſcience appear to be on their Side. For as the natural Parts and Capacities of Men are very Different, as their Opportunities and Advantages for attaining to it likewiſe are; ſo the Meaſures and Degrees God expects to receive from them, are Greater, or Leſs, in Proportion thereto. For the Goſpel Rule



Rule is, that *to whom much is given, of him shall much be required*, Luke xii. 48. and that (as St. Paul tells us) is to *be accepted according to what a Man hath, and not according to what he hath not received.* 2 Cor. viii. 12.

But then on the other Hand it is to be considered, that this favourable Allowance must necessarily be presupposed to be entirely exclusive of all wilful and affected Ignorance in this Respect; which is confessedly so far from lessening, or palliating, that it greatly aggravates and enhances the Guilt of it. And how few are there who have any just Pretence to be excepted out of this Number? How many on the contrary are there, who, out of a Supine, Careless Temper, neglect the Means of Knowledge here offered them, because they will not be at the Pains and Trou-

Trouble to make Use of them ; or (which is yet worse) have so far set their Hearts upon the Vanities and Vices of *this* World, as wilfully to decline looking at all into the Spiritual Objects and Obligations of the *Next* ?

Brightness of Parts with proper Acquirements of Learning suitable to them, are doubtless of great Use and Advantage for a higher Attainment of this Divine Knowledge ; and the stricter Account therefore must be expected from those, who are blessed with them, to be hereafter called to, if they neglect or pervert them. But as to the more Vulgar and Ignorant Set of Christians, the like Strictness is not required. Their Duties are generally known, and common to all, and though they lie interspersed in several Parts of the Holy

B

Bible,

Bible, yet as they are all collected and brought into a narrow Compass in our Church Catechism, and other practical Tracts (of which great Numbers are yearly published and dispersed for that Purpose) there is now no Room left for any Complaints of that Kind.

The several Rules of Piety, Charity, and Righteousness, which are esteemed sufficient to *make Men* wise, and entitle them *to Salvation* are every where so frequently inculcated and enforced, and that in such plain and familiar Terms and Expressions, as are easy to be understood, and may therefore by Divine Grace be reduced to Practice, as they ought to be by all good Christians, without Exception. And as to their Faith in Point of Doctrine, however Weak and Imperfect in itself,

self, if it be steady and sincere without Disguise, it will in Mercy be accepted of, and rewarded as such.--- And though Doubts and Scruples may on some Occasions happen to arise in their Minds; yet, as the *Priest's Lips are to preserve Knowledge*, they need only have Recourse to the Counsel and Instructions of their Spiritual Pastors, to inform and set them right in the true Christian Notions they ought to have of those Matters.

But to crown all these Directions with the best Assurances of Success, there is another Duty yet more necessary for them to be urged and exhorted to; and that is, that they would begin and end all their Endeavours for the Attainment of this Knowledge, with hearty and devout Prayers to the Throne of God's

Grace, to beg his Divine Assistance and Concurrence therein, and join with the Royal Prophet in that pious Ejaculation, Psal. cxix. 33, 34.

*“ Teach me, O Lord, the Way of  
 “ thy Statutes, and I shall keep it  
 “ unto the End: Give me Understand-  
 “ ing, and I shall keep thy Law;  
 “ yea, I shall keep it with my whole  
 “ Heart.*

## SECTION I.

The first and fundamental Objection which the Atheists make use of upon this Head is grounded on the Disbelief of any Divine Revelation whatever, which makes them resolutely bent against all the Arguments, that can be brought from those sacred Writings to prove it.---- They will not allow them to be a proper Medium for the Demonstration

tion of God's Existence; but give it the Name of a *Circular Probation*, which all the ancient Philosophers in their syllogistical Forms of arguing, have excepted against as invalid and defective.

But what is this to the great Point now before us? Is there not an Infinite Difference and Distinction to be made between Objects purely Spiritual and Eternal, and those of a Material and Temporal Nature? Must not the former, which is allowed to be far above our Comprehension, be excepted from the common Rule of Reasoning about Things that fall within the Reach of our Capacities to comprehend? The Case no Doubt is Extraordinary, and so also must the Way of judging and discoursing of it be; otherwise the Heavenly Host of Spirits

and Angels above must not be thought of, or argued about at all, which is in Reality the main End our Infidel Opponents on this Head seem to have in their View.

But setting aside this Metaphysical Fallacy, as nothing to the present Purpose, and that I may argue with the Deists upon the Foot of their beloved *Reason*, (which they arbitrarily presume to make the only Test and Standard of all Truth, Divine as well as Human :) The best and shortest Way I can think of for that Purpose is, to lay down some general and self-evident Positions, with regard to the Nature, Authority, and Obligation of the Holy Scriptures, and draw such brief Inferences and Arguments from them, as will, I hope, be sufficient with every Impartial Reader,

to

to obviate their Cavils and Objections against them, *viz.*

“ That God should publish a  
 “ standing Revelation of his Nature  
 “ and Will to Mankind, and point out  
 “ such Doctrines and Precepts to  
 “ them, as rational and free Agents,  
 “ for the Rule of their Faith and  
 “ Conduct of their Lives.-----And,  
 “ that he should enforce it with such  
 “ Sanctions as were necessary to those  
 “ Ends,”-----are Truths so highly rational in themselves, and so universally believed and acknowledged as such, both by Jews and Christians (to whom they were successively promulged) that they cannot be denied or gainsayed without a manifest Force upon Reason itself,

As will ye tmore fully and distinctly appear, from the following Considerations, to wit, *First*, from the Uni-



formity and near Alliance there is between the Old Testament and the New, with Regard to the general Scheme and Purport of both ; on which Account they are justly compared to two Indentures that exactly tally and correspond with each other.

----*Secondly*, from the noted Harmony and Agreement among the several inspired Writers, whose Names they bear, notwithstanding the different and distant Times and Places wherein they were written, which takes off all Suspicion of any fraudulent Combination they can possibly be charged with.-----*And, Thirdly*, from the moral Tests and Criteria required in all such Cases to entitle them to our Belief and Reception of them, with Respect to the Number and Character, as well as the undisguised Veracity  
and

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. 17  
and Disinterestedness. that plainly  
manifested itself in the open Testi-  
mony they have given of the several  
Facts therein related.

By all which it is beyond Contra-  
diction clear, that they were so far  
from having any selfish or wordly In-  
terest in View, that, (as our Saviour  
himself often foretold them) they had  
nothing else but Hatred, Persecu-  
tion, and Death itself to expect for  
their Faith and Zeal in the Propaga-  
tion of his Gospel, (as many of them  
too fatally experienced) by suffering  
Martyrdom on that Account.

A Testimony so very convincing to  
their greatest Enemies, the Jewish  
Rulers themselves, that they could  
not but own the *many Miracles*  
*Christ wrought* amongst the People,  
though they invidiously ascribed them  
to the *Power of the Devil*. And there-

by justly incurred the Imputation of that gross Absurdity he charged them with, implied in that sarcastical Question which he put to them on that Occasion:---*If Satan be divided against Satan, how then shall his Kingdom stand?*

## S E C T. II.

But to leave the Deists also without Excuse, and convince them of the Unreasonableness of their Exceptions against these Divine Revelations; I need only appeal to their own Experience, of the natural Weakness and Depravity of their present State, to shew the manifest Contradiction it bears to that very Principle they so presumptuously extol, and claim the Privilege of, in Vindication of the gross Errors they undertake to defend by it.

For

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. 19

For this is in Truth, a Matter of Fact, which they are so sensibly affected with, that they scruple not to make Use of it, as a Plea for their Unbelief of, and Disobedience, to the Divine Laws; upon a groundless Supposition that a Being of so merciful and gracious a Disposition, as God is universally represented to be, will not call them to an Account for those Faults and Transgressions, which in that depraved State of Nature, they brought into the World with them, it is not in their Power to prevent, or avoid.

An Absurdity so notoriously false and unjustifiable, that it is in Effect nothing less than charging God with those Sins, which they themselves by their wilful persisting in them, are the only Occasion of.-----It is on this very Account likewise, we find them

so forward and industrious to persuade themselves and others, “ that the Evangelical Doctrines are as much too sublime and mysterious for their finite Understandings to comprehend, as its Precepts are too strict for their depraved Affections to be regulated and restrained by.”

It must no Doubt be acknowledged, that there are several obscure and difficult Passages in all ancient Laws and Institutions whatsoever, which require the utmost Skill and Judgment of the most Learned Interpreters to explain and unfold. How much more then must we expect to find them in the Holy Scriptures, the Subject of which is confessedly of too sublime and transcendent a Nature for our present Capacities to form any adequate Idea of? But as the Divine Authority of these sacred

Writings

## THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. 21

Writings can by no Means be infringed or diminished by the Mystriousness of them; it must be equally as absurd to call in Question the former for the Sake of the latter; as it is to plead an Excuse for their neglecting to *read* and *search* into them at all, notwithstanding the express Command of Christ himself requires it: And the sacred Character he has impressed upon them, of being *the Words of eternal Life*, the only true Rule of Faith and Morals, on which all our future Happiness or Misery must consequently depend.

But, without regard to any Considerations of this Sort, the Infidel still complains of his Ignorance and Inability to attain Salvation by them; and it is no Wonder he should, when the true Cause of this Complaint is  
not



is not really owing to any Imperfection or Defect in that Divine Revelation ; but to his own wilful Perverseness in rejecting the Offer of that saving Knowledge and Instruction of every Kind, that is therein set forth.

He will not in Truth be at the Trouble to examine into the genuine received Sense and Meaning of them, by comparing the particular Texts, which seem to differ or interfere with each other, and explaining such as are most obscure and difficult by parallel Places, that are more obvious and easy to be understood ; which is the only true Rule of such Interpretation. But so far is he from following this Rule, that through an affected Ignorance and Instability in Point of Faith, he industriously perverts it to vindicate his Unbelief ; and is therefore

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. 23  
fore juſtly charged by St. *Peter*, with  
*wreſting it to his own Deſtruction.*  
2 Pet. iii. 16.---As chuſing rather to  
*walk on ſtill in Darkneſs*, than to  
ſtand ſelf-condemned for the open  
Breach of thoſe Chriſtian Duties,  
which by the daily Aſſiſtance of the  
Divine Grace, he might otherwiſe be  
enabled to diſcharge.

### S E C T. III.

But this is a Choice ſo inconſiſtent  
with the Principles of Chriſt's Reli-  
gion, that it cannot otherwiſe be ac-  
counted for, but upon the Foot of  
that true and only valid Reaſon of  
the Apoſtle St. *Paul* aſſigns for it,  
*That the Natural Man perceiveth not*  
*the Things of God, neither can he*  
*know them, becauſe they are only to be*  
*ſpiritually diſcerned.* 1 Cor. ii. 14.  
They are not like the ordinary Gifts  
and



and Endowments of Human Nature, proportioned to the different Abilities and Capacities of Mankind in general; but appropriated in a more peculiar Manner, to the inward good Qualities and Dispositions of those pious Christians, whose Principles and Inclinations lead them to embrace and make a right Use of them, as the only Means by which they can hope to reap the happy Fruits and Effects they produce.

For how improbable, or rather impossible, is it, that a Man, under the powerful Influence of his Lusts and Passions, whose Heart is prepossessed with the Love of the World, and the present Enjoyment of it, should be ready and willing to receive the spiritual Truths of the Gospel Institution, which are so directly opposite to them, without a previous

vious Disposition of the Mind to prepare and incline him to it? The external Evidences, which were manifested to the World, at the first preaching of it, may probably work so far upon his Understanding, as out of Captiousness, or Curiosity to search into the Truth and Validity of them: But they cannot Influence his Will and Affections to embrace the Doctrines, or conform to the Precepts therein prescribed.

## S E C T. IV.

It is upon this Account we find our Saviour Christ is so sollicitous to warn his Disciples and Followers of the great Lukewarmness and Indifference he observed among them in that Respect; by declaring to them, that those, and those only who *did his Will should know of his*

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*trine, whether it was of God, or whether he spoke of himself. Jo. vii.*

17. And elsewhere, *That no Man could come unto the Father but by Him; That he, who is of God beareth God's Words, and that they therefore heard them not, because they were not of God.*---And upon the same weighty Motive it was, that St. *Luke* in the Acts of the Apostles, illustrates this Doctrine by the Example of *Lydia*, whose Heart, he tells us, *God opened to attend to his Preaching* for her Instruction in the Christian Faith; ---And that St. *Paul* himself takes so much Pains in his several Epistles to inculcate and point out to us the pressing Motives and Encouragements which all true Christians have to make their Addresses to the Throne of God, for the Divine Assistance of his Grace to that End.

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THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. 27

The general Drift and Purport of all which is as follows, *viz.* “ That the Son of God, who sits at the Right-Hand of his Father in the Higheſt Heavens, is himſelf our conſtant Advocate and Mediator with him, by pleading the Merits of his Croſs and Paſſion for the gracious Pardon and Remiſſion of our Sins; ---And, that we may not relapſe into, or be entirely overcome and enſlaved by them, ’tis the peculiar Office of his Divine Spirit to inſtill religious Thoughts and Deſires into our Hearts, to labour together with us, in the great Work of our Salvation; to comfort and ſupport us under our Infirmities and Afflictions, whenſoever they oppreſs us, and enable us *to do all Things thro’ Chriſt, that ſtrengthens us.*

And

And what a glorious and engaging View does this afford us of the Oeconomy of the Gospel Dispensation, and consequently of the infinite Depth of the Power and Wisdom and Goodness of God in the Work of our Redemption? What a surprizing Happiness and Comfort must this needs inspire into every true Christian's Breast; and what a high Degree, on the other Hand, of Sorrow and Anguish, Remorse and Reproach must the Self-conscious Infidels feel in theirs, who wilfully forfeit and disclaim all the saving Privileges and Promises before-mentioned, and, by an imaginary Notion, that 'tis possible they may be false, run at all Adventures in the Dark to their own Destruction.

## S E C T. V.

And if this be really and truly the State of the Case, with what Face can they pretend to oppose and reject the Evidences of the several Divine Truths I have here represented to them? Shall the affected Obstinacy and Singularity of a Sect of Free-Thinkers, in Contradiction to all the Apostolical, as well as the most learned Writers of all Ages, since the Establishment of Christianity in the World, be deemed of any Weight to be listened to, or regarded in Preference to them?

If they were able to disprove the Divine Authority of these sacred Writings, or shew there is any real Falshood in the Narration of the several Miracles, or any noted Deficiency in fulfilling the most material Pre-

Predictions therein recorded; they might in some Measure be excused. But, since they are both of them known and acknowledged (as was just now mentioned) by the most Learned, Critical, and unprejudic'd Judges in all preceding Ages, and are in many Respects too, more solemnly and signally attested, than any other Books and Writings that have ever yet appeared amongst us: They must undeniably stand condemned by all true Christians, and fall a Sacrifice to their own unpardonable Obstinacy and Impiety on that Account.

The Chief, if not the only Reply they have in Earnest to make to all this in their own Vindication is,  
 “ That they can form no Notion or  
 “ Idea in their Minds of a Spiritual  
 “ and Eternal Being, or of the Su-  
 “ per-



“pernatural Operations, which are  
 “there ascrib’d to him, and there-  
 “fore they cannot be persuaded to  
 “believe them.” But what an Ir-  
 rational Way of arguing this is, and  
 and how many gross Absurdities must  
 of Course follow from it, will re-  
 quire but little Time or Pains to make  
 them sensible of.

We are told in Scripture, that *no*  
*Man hath at any Time seen God, or*  
*any Similitude of him*; nor is it pos-  
 sible, during the present Mortal State  
 we are in, that we should be ad-  
 mitted to it. But is it thence to  
 be inferred, that there is no such  
 Divine Being existent in the World?  
 ---Or, that the over-ruling Power  
 and Dispensations of his Providence  
 are doubtful and uncertain, because  
 they cannot discern the secret Turn-  
 ings and Windings of it in the Course  
 of



of human Affairs, or clearly account for the seeming Inequality of them? ---And, that the Truth of those other important Points of the several Miracles and Prophecies therein recorded, should likewise be called in Question, and rejected for no other apparent Reason, but because they could not themselves be Eye-Witnesses of the former, or the actual Accomplishment and fulfilling of the latter?

These are all of them such Capricious, Trifling, and Unjustifiable Exceptions, that they may truly be said to answer and confute themselves; and cannot therefore be supposed to pass among Christians as any real Excuse, for the manifest Absurdity of their Disbelief of them. ---Let them but diligently search into the Holy Scriptures (as it is their bound-

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. 33

bounden Duty and highest Interest to do) and allow them the same Credit, which they scruple not to give to all the Authentick Profane Histories of those Times; and they cannot chuse, without the utmost Prejudice imaginable, but be convinced of the dangerous Errors they have unhappily fallen into; and by Degrees be persuaded (as some of them I hope will) to embrace again the Christian Faith, by which alone they can be sav'd.

S E C T. VI.

The only remaining Obstacle that can in Truth be well supposed to stand in the Way of the greatest Part of them, which will not suffer them to listen to any Persuasions of this Sort,---is that utter Aversion they

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seem to have to the Purity and Sanctity of the Gospel Dispensation, to which their Libertine Principles and Practices are a direct Contradiction. 'Tis to get rid of this, and the Self-conscious Reproach that attends the Transgression of it, which makes them resolutely bent to banish all Thoughts of God and another World out of their Minds, and to frame a Law peculiar to themselves, that they may live as they list, without the uneasy Apprehensions of being call'd to a future Account for it.

By which daring Way of acting, having thrown off the Disguise of *Deists*, they become downright *Atheists* in Theory, as well as in Practice; and, instead of employing as they ought, that noble Faculty of Reason God has given them for his  
Glo-

Glory, are so audacious as to pervert it to the contrary Purpose of profaning his Name, and inventing Groundless Fallacious Arguments to divest him of his very Being. ----- And 'what can be the Consequence of such a monstrous Degree of Impiety, if still persisted in, but *a certain fearful Looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, when Christ comes in the Clouds with Power and great Glory,* to pass his Final Sentence upon them, in Proportion to the Heinousness of it?

To prevent, if possible, the Fatal Doom, hanging over their Heads, let me ardently entreat as many of them as are yet susceptible of these weighty and well-meant Reflections, or have any Degree of Tendency towards a Conversion; to be fore-

warn'd of the terrible Judgments that await them in another Life ; to repent betimes of their many outrageous Provocations against the most High ; and return for Refuge, to the sacred Fold of that Church they have so unworthily deserted, *whilst the Day of Salvation lasts* ; lest *the Night of Death* comes unawares upon them, when it will no longer be in their Power *to work it out*.

Having thus finished the several Particulars of what I had to offer in the foregoing Dissertation, I now proceed to the more immediate Consideration of the general Subject I propose to treat of in the following Method, *viz.* to set before you,

I, The

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. 37


1. The Certainty of God's Existence.
2. The Spiritual Nature and Unity of his Essence.
3. The Divine Attributes and Perfections inherent in it, and
4. The practical Inferences, Remarks, and Exhortations, that naturally arise from each other.



THE



THE  
Certainty *and* Necessity  
OF  
GOD'S EXISTENCE.

HAT *there is a God*, is a Principle so agreeable to, and, by a secret Sort of Instinct, so interwoven in our very Nature, that it may justly be questioned whether 'tis possible there should be such a Monster in Mankind, as a downright Atheist in Theory and Speculation. For, as *Cicero* tells us, *Lib. I. de Legibus.*  
*Nulla*



*Nulla Gens est tam immansueta neque tam fera, quæ non, etiamsi ignoret qualem habere Deum deceat, tamen habendum sciat*; i. e. There is no Nation under Heaven so wild and barbarous, as not to acknowledge the Being of a God, tho' they may be mistaken in their Apprehensions of His Nature; and consequently in the Manner of paying Worship and Adoration to Him.

We have, indeed, *some few* Instances of the Heathen Philosophers in the darker Ages of the World, that are branded with the Name of *Attheists* for pretending to raise Arguments and Objections against this Truth. But as it is more than probable, that this proceeded rather from a wanton, vain Humour of Scepticism and Singularity, than from any real Conviction of their own Minds; so it reached



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no farther than a verbal Contest, or Argumentation, to shew their Skill and Dexterity in maintaining a Contradiction against the rest of Mankind.

But supposing (what is hardly to be imagined) that they had by Degrees brought their Minds to be reconciled to it; yet it is no more to be admitted as a just Exception against the general Belief of God's Existence, than the unaccountable Barbarity of some Men's destroying their own Bodies, is an Argument against the Principle of Self-preservation, and the Natural Desire of Life: Especially considering the illiterate Ages of Heathenism they lived in, and their utter Ignorance of those Divine Revelations which God has graciously since vouchsafed us the Knowledge and Influence of.

There

There are, it must be owned, a Set of Men in the World, (I would to God there were fewer of them) who, under the Light of *Christ's* Gospel, and the Influences of His Grace, are so far devoted to the bewitching Interests, and Honours, and sensual Indulgencies of this World, that, as the Royal Psalmist asserts, *they care not for God, neither is God in all their Thoughts.* And in this Sense every profane and presumptuous Sinner may be said to deny a God; because he speaks, acts, and lives, as if there were none; and therefore endeavours all he can to persuade himself to it; a Fact which our daily Experience affords us, alas! but too many flagrant Testimonies of.

Thus for Instance, how common is it, to hear a Libertine in the

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Midst of his Jollity and Extravagance, when his Imagination is heated, and his Blood runs high, to profess himself so audaciously profane and *foolish*, as to say in his Heart, *there is no God*; and openly to boast too, that he has cast off the Yoke and Bondage of Religion, and that without any Regard to a supream Almighty Power, he is his own absolute Master, without Restraint or Controul. He'll tell you, that Religion is but a Machine of State, a mere political Institution to regulate the Disorders of Civil Societies, and keep the World in Awe, and that he regards no Laws farther than they are subservient to that End.

But this is all nothing but Rant, and Bravado, the Effect of Humour and Gaiety, not the Result of his Reason and Conscience, which flies  
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in his Face at the same Time that he vents it; and if he would give you his private Sentiments, in a more sober and serious Mood, when his Passions are cool, and his Thoughts sedate, it may justly be presumed he will own it to be so. *Mentitur enim*

(says *Seneca*) *qui dicit se non sentire esse Deum, nam etsi tibi affirmet interdum, nocte tamen, & sibi dubitat.*

“ He lies that says he believes there  
“ is no God ; for tho’ he may have  
“ the Confidence to profess this in  
“ the Day-Time among his Compa-  
“ nions, yet in the Night, when he  
“ is by himself, he is greatly per-  
“ plexed in his Thoughts about it.”

In short, this is a Principle so riveted in Human Nature, that tho’ it may perhaps be stifled and suppressed for some Time ; yet it can never be wholly extinguished and

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removed. For we can neither think deliberately of our own Original, nor consider the Formation of other created Beings, without being forcibly led on by a natural Chain of Thoughts to acknowledge and believe a God as the primary Cause of all.

So that we must either cease to be what we really are, or put an absolute Force upon the Faculties of our *Mind* to pass a different Judgment upon it.-----And this plainly appears to be the Case of every licentious Christian, who by the violent Bent and Bias of his corrupt Affections, does in Effect, attract and seduce the Will to consent to such vicious Actions as his Understanding and Conscience cannot but reproach and condemn him for.

But

But so far is this from working upon his Mind to discard, or get rid of this innate Principle; that he finds by Experience, 'tis not in his Power to do so, without having Recourse to some outward Ways and Means to accomplish that End.-----In order to which he finds it necessary, not only to associate with a Set of Libertines like himself, to bear up his Spirits, and confirm him in the Infidel Notions he has before imbib'd; but to launch out with them into the same Excesses of Riot, Luxury and Intemperance they are notoriously addicted to. ----- And what contributes not a little to the farther spreading of these Licentious Courses, is, the setting up stated Meetings for publick Sports and Diversions of different Kinds; which by the modish Taste and Disposition of the present Age, are but too eagerly

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eagerly and generally encouraged and promoted amongst us, without considering the many mischievous Effects, which are by woeful Experience, found to take their Rise from them.

But all these are still to as little Purpose as the former. They are at best but transient and delusive Enjoyments, that last no longer than the Health and Gaiety and Prosperity of the Transgressors will allow ; which are sure to leave such a pungent Sting of Remorse behind them, as is never effectually to be eradicated or removed without the sincerest Acts of a contrite Repentance and steady Resolution to reform them, by returning to those salutary Paths of Faith and Righteousness, which alone can lead them to the Gate of Eternal Life.

S E C T.

## S E C T. I.

On all these Accounts therefore, as the Belief of a God is the fundamental Principle of all Religion, that ought rather to be taken for granted, than proved in a Christian State and Country (as I trust ours will always continue and approve itself to be) it will be sufficient to say thus much in general-----upon the whole, *viz.*

“ That if the natural Notions we have of a God, impressed on the Mind of Man at his Creation, and those confirmed to us by the successive Chain of Causes and Effects and the common Consent of Mankind therein, from the Beginning of all Things : -----If the stupendous Frame and Beauty of the visible World, replenished as it is with such a wonderful Variety of Creatures, all distinguished



guished from each other, in the Contexture of their Parts and Qualities, and all preserved and governed in such an excellent Order and Harmony as we see they are. Or if, besides what our own Experience has taught us, any Credit is to be given to the History of all Ages, attesting the several signal Acts of Providence, Miracles, and Prophecies, that have been manifested throughout the World: If all, I say, or any of these Things bear the Force of a Demonstration to convince Men of this divine Truth, (as 'tis next to impossible but they should) it will, and must follow, that the Existence of a Supreme, Eternal Being, *from whom are all Things, and by whom all Things consist*, must be a Reality beyond Dispute; and that 'tis therefore the greatest Absurdity, as well as Impiety,

piety, imaginable, to presume to question, or contradict it.

Especially, if it is considered farther, that without the Supposal and Belief of this fundamental Principle, there would be no such Thing, as Virtue, and Religion, or Civil Society and Government to be found amongst us. Every Man would then be his own Master, and Lawgiver, without owning any Right in his Superiors to command, or any Obligation on his own Part to obey; the most Loose and Profligate would be the best esteemed, and the Strongest and most Powerful the only Princes and Potentates upon Earth.

This indeed is a Notion which an Atheistical Writer of the last Age was pleased to give us of the State of Human Nature; but so far is it from deserving that Name, that it divests

us of the very Nature, which the Great Author of our Being thought fit to invest us with; and under a Pretence of freeing us from all the Restraints of Law and Duty, must involve Mankind in Distraction and Confusion, and make us more *wretched than the Beasts that perish*. For what else but this can possibly be expected from those Libertine Principles he has so boldly advanced, and industriously endeavoured in the most glaring Light to propagate in the World?

If, by that Free Liberty of Thinking and Acting he pleads for, nothing more was meant than a due Claim to the Exercise of it in all Things relating to our Civil and Religious Rights, as established among us; it would not only be allowable, but highly just and reasonable in itself:

But,

But, as the main Drift of his Arguments is to fet Men free from all those Bounds and Limits, which the Laws of God and Man have exprefsly enjoined, as necessary for the Preservation of those Rights; it is a Liberty so unwarrantable as well as dangerous and absurd, that it ought to be detested and guarded against by every true Member both of Church and State, as tending directly to downright Anarchy and Rebellion on the one Hand, and to the utter Subversion of all Religion on the other.----- From this brief and general View of these Particulars, duly reflected on, as we cannot but own the Necessity of a firm Belief in God for the Foundation of all Truth and Virtue, as well as Society and Government in the World; so we cannot but agree with the Apostle, that whoever de-

fires or expects to be happy in this World or the next, must believe that God is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

But the great Misfortune is, that in the Midst of so many different Principles and Persuasions in Religion, and those increased and fomented by the perpetual Contentions and Disputes raised about them; we have but too much Cause to fear, it will by Degrees end in the Subversion of Christianity itself;----- *viz.* “ That whilst the Zealots of the several Sects and Parties are thus wrangling, perplexing and confounding each other, the greater Part of them, being at a Loss to distinguish Truth from Falsehood, or in any Measure determine, which are in the Right, and which in the Wrong, they are naturally led, by the prevalent Bias of  
their



their Lufts and Vices, to be of no Religion at all.

All this the professed Infidels (who never fail to lay hold of such promising Advantages on their Side) are too invidiously Quick-sighted to overlook, or neglect: Their Heads are always at work to carry on their sinister Designs, by instilling their pernicious Principles into the wavering Christian's Head, and setting before him the strongest and most plausible Arguments, their profane Wit and Rhetorick can invent, in Favour of their own Opinions:-----And at the same Time to put such loose and Atheistical Tracts of several Sorts into his Hands, as they judge most effectual to engage and confirm him therein. And what other Effect can be expected to ensue from this insidious Way of Acting, but that Numbers of Converts

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verts muſt in all Likelihood be daily brought into the Infidel's Fold, and be made for ever unhappy with them?

And that this is true in Fact, we have the Teſtimony of ſeveral Good Chriſtians among us, who cannot but own with Grief, that, tho' they have the greateſt Abhorrence of every thing they *bear*, or *read* of that Kind; yet it is but too apt on ſome Occaſions to make ſuch deep Impreſſions upon their Minds, and come ſo often into their Thoughts, as to create an irkſome Uneaſineſs in them, which is not without ſome Difficulty to be diverted or removed; and there are, comparatively ſpeaking, but few, 'tis to be feared, ſo perfectly confirmed and eſta bliſhed in the Faith, as to be entirely free from it.

But, as this is a manifeſt Proof, that there are ſtill ſome latent Seeds  
of

of Infidelity lodg'd by Nature in all the Posterity of *Adam* since the Fall; so 'tis necessarily incumbent on us, who have the Happiness to be redeemed from it, by the Merits of Christ's Death, and the preaching of his Gospel, *to put on* (as the Apostle St. *Paul* exhorts) *the whole Armour of Faith and Righteousness, that we may be able to stand against the Wiles of the Devil.* Ephes. vi. 11. and guard against those barefac'd Attacks of Infidelity and Irreligion, that are so industriously set up in Opposition to it.







THE  
SPIRITUAL NATURE  
AND  
UNITY of his ESSENCE.

HAVING thus far endeavoured to give the Reader a general View of the fundamental Point of God's Existence, I come now to the Consideration of the *Spiritual Nature and Unity of his Essence.*

In order to this, it is previously to be observed, that though it is impossible for us to raise our Minds  
to

## UNITY OF HIS ESSENCE. 57

to such a Pitch of Spirituality, as fully to comprehend what is Infinite and Invisible: Yet it behoves us to endeavour, as far as our finite Reason will enable us, to abstract and separate from the Divine Being, whatever is in any Kind Evil or Defective, and, consequently, to ascribe to him the utmost Degrees of Goodness, Perfection, and Excellence, which either Reason or Revelation, gives us an Idea of.

### S E C T. I.

Now as to the Nature of God, which is here first to be considered, the Scripture is express, that *He is a Spirit*. Jo. iv. 24, that is, according to the best Description that can be given of it, He is a Powerful Intelligent Being, without any material Figure or Parts; not visible to our

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mortals

mortal Eyes, and therefore not to be represented by any Kind of sensible Image ; nor susceptible of the Qualities and Affections of Matter, and therefore not capable of being bounded, divided, or circumscribed. Nor is it, indeed, consistent with *Reason* that He should ; for these being all Imperfections, which we experience in our ourselves, as Creatures, and consequently incompatible with the Nature of an Infinite and Almighty Creator, cannot, without the greatest Absurdity and Contradiction, be attributed to Him.

'Tis true, God has sometimes manifested His Glory by visible Appearances in the first Ages of the World ; such as were most proper to raise such a great and astonishing Idea of His Nature in the Minds of Men, as might be effectual to reclaim them  
from

from their Idolatry, and awe them into an Observation of His Laws and Institutions. Thus He appeared to *Moses* in Mount *Sinai*, at the Delivery of the Law in Thunder and Lightning, and to the *Israelites* of old, on their Passage thro' the Wilderness in the *Pillar of a Cloud by Day, and the Pillar of Fire by Night*. But these being only Signs and Symbols of his Presence, and no real Indication of His Personal Nature (which *Moses* himself expressly says, they *saw no Similitude of*) He strictly cautions the People that they should not corrupt themselves, by making *a graven Image, the Likeness of any Figure to worship it*. Exodus xx. 4.

Nor does it at all invalidate the  
of this Argument, that we f

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frequently described in Scripture, with *Face* and *Hands*, and such other *Parts* of a Body, as are conformable to his Creatures. For as the glorious Acts and Dispensations of His Providence are not otherwise to be represented to us, then by such sensible Images, as we are capable of receiving; *so it seemed good to the Holy Ghost*, in Condescension to our weak and finite Understandings, to make Use of such Terms and Phrases of Speech in the Delivery of His Word, as are most agreeable to our natural Ideas, and Conceptions of Things that fall under our Cognizance.

Thus God's being pleased and delighted with the Righteousness of his People, is represented by the Figure of *His Face shining upon them*; His Power of dispensing Rewards and Punish-

Punishments, by the *opening his Hand,*  
*and stretching out His Arm,* to do  
 this, or that; as likewise the exten-  
 sive Perfection of His Wisdom and  
 Justice, by *looking down with his Eyes*  
*upon the Children of Men,* beholding  
*the Evil and the Good, and weighing*  
*the Actions* of each in a *Ballance.*  
 But to conclude from these, and  
 such like Expressions, that He has  
 actually such Parts and Members as  
 are there figuratively represented, is  
 not only an Absurdity in itself, but  
 is plainly contradictory to what He  
 has been pleased to reveal to us in  
 His Divine Word, where he frequent-  
 ly puts these Questions to the Makers  
 of Images, by His Prophets: *To*  
*whom,* says he, *will ye liken Me?*  
*Or, What Likeness will ye compare*  
*Me to?* Which evidently point  
 out to us, that as there is no created  
 Being

Being can bear any adequate Resemblance to the Creator; so 'tis the greatest Affront and Dishonour to his Divine Being to frame to ourselves any Image or Figure, to represent Him; much more to pay Homage and Adoration to it.

This is what has been generally own'd by the Wifest and most Learned of the Heathen Philosophers, particularly *Plato*, who gives him the Title of Νῆς ἀσώματος, *Mens Incorporalis*. And the great Orator *Tully*, more explicitly represents him to be *Mens Divina, Pura, & Simplex, Soluta & Libera, segregata ab omni Concretione Mortali*, ---- “ A  
 “ Pure, Simple Mind, Free and Independent, without the least Mixture of any Thing that is Material,  
 “ or Mortal.”

And



UNITY OF HIS ESSENCE. 63

And as God is by Nature a spiritual Being, so is He likewise endued with infinite Perfections of different Kinds. But before I proceed to treat of these (which come more properly under the Denomination of His *Divine Attributes*) the next Point that falls under my Consideration in the Method proposed, is

S E C T. II.

*The Unity of his Nature ;*

A peculiar Property, so essentially vested in him, that it appears to be no less agreeable to the Dictates of *human Reason*, than it is to the Authority of Divine Revelation. For as God is the First Cause, the only Supreme Author and Governor of the World, from whom all Things in Nature first derived their Being, and  
upon



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upon whom they must depend for the Continuance of it ; so to suppose more Beings than One, infinitely Supreme and Eternal, is a downright Contradiction, that is not to be reconciled by the nicest Distinctions that Philosophy can furnish us with.

And, indeed, if we argue from our own Experience of the Consequences arising from it ; if we do but observe the Order and Harmony of the Creation and see how all Things continue in the same Course of Acting they were at first put into, and how they all severally conspire to one and the same End, we must as reasonably infer the Unity of a Supreme Being, who governs them, as we do from the lasting Peace and Tranquility of a Kingdom, composed, as it is, of different Parties, Humours, and Persuasions (which each  
of

UNITY OF HIS ESSENCE. 57

of them expect and contend to be gratified in) that there is One Sovereign Prince and Lawgiver, that regulates and restrains them within their proper Bounds; or, from the orderly March and Engagement of an Army, that 'tis managed by the Conduct of one supreme Commander.

This the very Heathens were so sensibly convinced of, that tho' they were notoriously addicted to Polytheism and Idolatry, and allowed of subordinate Deities, which they feverally worshipped under different Figures and Representations; yet the wisest and most knowing of them, (as appears by the Writings of some of their most eminent Philosophers, as well as Poets) asserted *only one Supreme* Maker and Governor of the World, to whom their Adorati--

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was primarily due.-----Thus *Plato* ascribes the making of the World to *One*; and *Aristotle*, as oft as he has Occasion to speak of God, does for the most Part make use of the singular Number; and in like Manner their Poets, we find, supposing but one Being Supreme, frequently stile Him---*The Father of Gods and Men* --- Ὑψιστος, μέγιστος, κρείττιστος --- The Highest, the Greatest, and most Excellent of all.

But not to insist on these common Arguments, that are drawn from the Reason and Testimony of Men, the Unity of the divine Nature is so frequently and expressly asserted in Scripture, that it seems to be the chief Design of *Moses* and the Prophets, as well as of Christ and his Apostles, to settle and establish it beyond Contradiction. *Thou shalt have no other Gods*

*Gods but me*, is the first of those ten Commandments, which the Almighty was pleased to deliver to *Moses* upon the Mount ; and we find it often repeated throughout the Writings of the *Old Testament*, and pressed Home upon the People in the most pathetic Exhortations, *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, besides Him there is none other ; therefore thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.* Deut. vi. 4. And for this Reason, as the Creation of all Things is frequently in the Pentateuch ascribed to the One God ; so the Prophets, in their Exhortations to the spiritual Worship of Him, speak of their going after other Gods, as *the highest* and most unpardonable Act of Idolatry.

And the *New Testament* runs on in the same Strain. Our Saviour him-

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self styles Him *the only true God*,  
Jo. xvii. 3. And in another Place,  
upon his being tempted by the De-  
vil in the Wilderness, to fall down to  
him, He quotes the Text above ci-  
ted, to repel the Temptation. And so  
St. Paul, the Apostle of the *Gentiles*,  
the more effectually to reclaim the  
*Corinthians* from their Attachment  
to Idolatry, assures them, that tho'  
they had formed to themselves se-  
veral other Gods, both in Heaven  
and in Earth (as *there were Gods*  
*many, and Lords many, yet to us,*  
*says he, there is but one God, of whom*  
*are all Things, and we in Him.*  
1 Cor. viii. 6. And again, arguing  
elsewhere for the Unity of our Faith  
in Him, he lays down this as the  
Principle and Foundation of it——  
that *there is but one God and Father*

of

UNITY OF HIS ESSENCE. 61  
*of all, who is above all, and thro' all,  
and in us all.* Eph. iv. 5, 6.

### S E C T. III.

But now, if this be the Case, if there be but one single, supreme and undivided Godhead, as these Texts do plainly and positively assert, how can the Divine Nature be said to belong to Three Distinct Persons; or in what Sense are we to believe a *Trinity in Unity*? This is that great Question, which has been so unhappily controverted in the Church of Christ, ever since the Time that the Apostate *Arius* first appeared in the World; and happy would it be for us, if the present Age were *not* as deeply tinctured with this pernicious Principle, as others that have gone before us.

That I may contribute, therefore, some Moments to the Solution of  
this

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this Question, and endeavour to set Men right in their Notions of this Matter, it will be necessary to observe; That as the several Texts before cited, for the Unity of the Divine Nature, are to be taken only in a relative Sense, as they stand opposed to the Idolatry of the Heathen Nations, and to the Multiplicity of false Deities that were set up among them; so they neither can, nor ought by any Means to be urged against the Trinity of Persons in the true Deity we worship: Nor do the Words of that noted Text, Jo. xvii. 3. *This is Life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent,* (though they seem to be put in the Way of Contradistinction to the *only true God*, and may probably be so meant with Regard to Christ's *Humanity*)  
yet

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yet as he is equally the Author and Giver of Eternal Life, the *Knowledge of Him*, as well as of God the Father, is made equally necessary to the Attainment of it.

It is therefore, plain and evident, beyond Dispute, that there are three divine Persons frequently spoken of in the *New Testament*, by the Names of *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, in which every Christian that is admitted into Christ's Church is required to be baptized, and to each of which the highest Titles and Attributes of God are distinctly ascribed. And 'tis likewise no less plain, that in some of those very Texts where these three Persons are mentioned, we find the Unity of the Godhead is either implicitly or expressly asserted; as appears more particularly in that noted Place of St. *John's* first Epistle,



v. 7. *There are three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.*----Which Text, (however industriously left out by the *Arians*, in the corrupt Copies that were written of the Gospel, during the Time in which that Heresy prevailed, is manifestly quoted by *Tertullian*, St. *Cyprian*, and others of the ancient Fathers, who wrote before that Time, and must undoubtedly, therefore, be Genuine and Authentick; as may be seen by any competent and impartial Enquirer, that will take the Pains to satisfy himself in that particular.

To enter into the Niceties of this mysterious Controversy (which has employed the Pens of so many learned Writers in the several Ages of the Church, from the first Broaching of  
it

UNITY OF HIS ESSENCE. 73

it to this Time, would carry me too far beyond the Bounds I proposed, and be as little satisfactory to the Reader, as it is to myself. It would still be as incomprehensible, as it ever was, and must be to our finite Understanding, without some farther Discovery of spiritual Light, than God has been pleased to impart to us in His divine Word.

As all the Explication therefore, that can be given of it, must be founded in, and rest upon those Passages of Scripture, which immediately relate to it ; so that we may not mistake, or deceive ourselves therein, it will be highly necessary to insert this Caution, by Way of Prevention, viz. “ that there are two Extremes to be avoided by all true Christians in the Construction they put upon them.”

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And these are, *first*, That we do not, with the *Unitarians*, make the Distinction between the three Persons purely notional, as if there was really but One Person in the Godhead, which, according to the various Effects and Operations that flow from Him, was sometimes called *Father*, sometimes *Son*, and sometimes *Holy Ghost*.:----Nor are we, *secondly*, with the *Tritheists*, from a wrong Idea of Personality, to frame to ourselves Three Eternal Minds, or Spiritual Substances, essentially distinct from, and inferior to one another; of which they suppose the Father to be Supreme, and only Self-originated, and the other two to be derived from, and of a lower Degree to him.

For as these are Heretical and dangerous Opinions, inconsistent with  
the

## UNITY OF HIS ESSENCE. 75

the Ancient Doctrine of the Primitive Church, which we solemnly profess to maintain in our own; so it highly concerns us to reject and avoid them as such.-----The Sum and Substance of which Doctrine is as follows; viz. “ That  
 “ though the divine Persons in the  
 “ ever-blessed Trinity are one and  
 “ the same in Substance, or Essence, yet they are distinct as  
 “ to the Modes or Manner of  
 “ their Subsisting; the Father being  
 “ said *to be made of none*, the Son  
 “ to be *begotten of the Father*, and  
 “ the Holy Ghost to *proceed* from  
 “ both. And *that in this Trinity*,  
 “ with Regard to the Nature and  
 “ Essence of the Godhead, (as it is  
 “ appositely expressed in the *Athanasian Creed*) *none is before, or*  
 “ *after other, none is greater or*

“ *less than another* ; but having all  
 “ the same incommunicable At-  
 “ tributes equally ascribed to them,  
 “ *are all Co-eternal and Co-equal.*

This, it must be owned, is a very transcendent Mystery, which seems in our present State to stagger and astonish us ; as every Thing that is beyond our Reach to comprehend is apt to do, even in the natural Operations of Causes and Effects. But since 'tis so fully and positively revealed by God himself, and we know 'tis impossible for God to deceive us ; since there is Nothing in it that is contradictory to our rational Faculties, *tho' never so much above them* ; and 'tis the safest likewise for us to adhere to that *Form of sound Words first delivered to the Saints* ; we are certainly obliged in Reason to believe it, tho' our

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our Reason cannot frame such a clear Idea of it, as it does of other Divine Truths that are less sublime.

Agreeably to this Opinion, we find the very learned and pious Bishop *Beveridge*, in his *Private Thoughts* upon this Article, p. 52, expressly declares, “ That tho’ this is a Mystery which he could not possibly conceive, yet ’tis a Truth he could easily believe, because it was so high as to be above his Comprehension; for it is impossible, says he, that any Thing should be true of the Infinite Creator, which can be fully or clearly expressed to the Capacities of a finite Creature, &c.

Nor is this any Way dissonant to the Notion the Apostle *St. Paul* gives us of it in his Epistle to the *Hebrews*, (xi. 1.) where he defines *Faith to be the Evidence of Things not seen*, i. e. of  
of

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of Things that will not bear a sensible Demonstration:-----And therefore, though this be confessedly a Point of that Nature, yet, as the Gospel has made it an Article of our Faith, we ought with all Humility to receive it as such; to consider the Weakness and Ignorance of our present State, and wait with Patience till we are admitted to a brighter Vision in a better Place, where the Veil, that now shades us from the transcendent Glories of the Godhead, will be removed, *and we shall see him as he is.*







OF THE  
DIVINE ATTRIBUTES  
AND  
*Perfections inherent in it.*

HAVING thus far briefly set  
before you in the best Light  
I could, the Spiritual Na-  
ture and Unity of the Divine Being,  
I come now to consider,

*Thirdly,* The several Attributes or  
Essential Properties, which may be  
said to flow from it, and are made  
use of by the School Divines, to re-  
present His Perfections to us under  
such distinct Ideas, as our Concep-  
tions



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tions are able to form from the different Modes of His Operations. And these are either, *first Incommunicable*, of which there is not the least Shadow of Resemblance in the Creatures, such are His *Infinity*, *Independence*, and *Immutability*; or, *secondly, Communicable*; which are in some Degrees imparted to us from Him, as *Wisdom*, *Holiness*, *Justice*, and *Power*.

I shall say something of each of these in their Order, as much as will be requisite to give the Reader a General Idea of them, or as the Compass and Design of my present Discourse will permit; referring him to larger Treatises for a fuller and more distinct Explication of them.

S E C T.

## S E C T. I.

*His Infinity.*

Of the former Sort the first is His *Infinity*, whereby all Things in his *Essence* are signified to be without *Measure*, or *Quality*, being not bounded by *Time*, and by *Consequence Eternal*; nor by *Place*, and therefore *Omnipresent*. And that this Attribute is essential to God, in both these *Respects*, is equally evident both from *Scripture* and *Reason*. As to the former, we are told, *Gen. xxi. 33. That He inhabiteth Eternity*; and *Pf. xc. 1, 2. That before the Mountains were brought forth, or ever the Earth and the World were made, He is God from everlasting, and World without End*. And on that Account, as the Name *Jehovah* seems to im-

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port, He is stiled *Alpha* and *Omega*, the *First and the Last*; that is, the original Principle from which all Things are derived, and the ultimate End, to which all Things are, or ought to be directed.

'Tis true, the Actions of God are often represented to us in Scripture under the Notion of *past*, *present*, and *to come*; which are the Differences of Time, and imply a succession: But this is not to be understood with Respect to the Almighty Himself, who is not capable of Change, or Variation; but only to the Effects, or Objects, that are produced by Him. For the several Periods of Time, which by us are divided into Hours, and Days, and Months, and Years, to measure out the Degrees of natural Motion, are by Him comprehended all under  
one

THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES. 83

one single View, in whose Sight, as the Psalmist expresses it, *a thousand Years are but as Yesterday.*

And the Reason of all this will sufficiently appear, if we consider the Absurdities that necessarily follow from the contrary Opinion. For if God be the Primary Cause of all Things, 'tis certain He could not receive His Being from Another: Because he would not then be the First. *Something*, therefore, (as a learned Author expresses it) *must be Eternal, otherwise nothing could be at all.* And as God did exist from all Eternity, so 'tis impossible He should ever cease to be; since nothing can do so, but by the Act of a Superior Being to annihilate it, and there being none Superior to the Deity, He must for ever exist, without a Possibility of Dissolution.

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This is a Consequence for rational and necessary, that even *Epicurus* himself, who endeavoured to rob God of as many Perfections as his Sagacity or Impiety would enable him to do, could not but allow him to be absolutely Happy and Immortal: And the Poets of old, who had yet wilder Thoughts of Him, do seldom mention His Name without the Title of Ἀθάνατος, and in all their solemn Oaths appeal to the Immortal God to witness for them. And indeed, to speak of a God that should be corruptible and mortal, is so monstrous an Absurdity, that whoever gives himself Leave to think, and consider the Nature of his Soul within him, cannot possibly be guilty of it.

Taking this, therefore, for granted,  
ed,



ed, pass we on to the other Branch of His Infinity, to wit,

## S E C T. II.

### *His Immensity.*

His *Omnipresence*, or *Immensity*, which, though it carries the same Authority and Reason along with it, yet is not so universally believed and assented to. The Opposers of this, are the *Epicureans* and *Socinians*; the former excluding God from the Government of the World, by denying His Providence, (of which I shall have Occasion to speak more at large under another Head) the other confining him to the Circle of His Throne in Heaven, by not allowing Him to be essentially present any where else, but only Virtually by His Influence and Operations.

Now

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Now to obviate this seeming Difficulty, we are to consider, that God's being said to  *dwell in Heaven,* is not to be so understood, as to exclude Him from the other Parts of the Universe, as if He were not on the Earth also ; but chiefly to point out to us the more Eminent Manner of His Presence in Heaven, and that as His Majesty and Glory is there most visibly and illustriously displayed ; so, in all our Addresses to Him, we should endeavour to withdraw our Minds from earthly Objects here below, and raise them up to those Regions above, from whence all Bliss and Happiness is derived.

Nor are we to believe that He is only virtually present with us, since He Himself has declared by His Prophet, *Isa. lxvi. 1. That as Heaven is his Throne, so Earth is his Footstool.*

*What*

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*What House, therefore, will ye build me, saith the Lord? Or what is the Place of my Abode? Do not I fill the Heavens and the Earth? And hence flowed those pious and sublime Expressions of the Royal Prophet, Thou art about my Path, and about my Bed, and spiest out all my Ways. Whither shall I go then from thy Spirit, or whither shall I fly from thy Presence? If I climb up into Heaven Thou art there; if I go down to Hell Thou art there also. Psa. cxxxix. 7, 8, 9. For there He is in the Effects of his Vengeance to punish the Ungodly, as well as in the Mansions above to reward the Just.*

Numbers of Authorities might be cited from the Heathen Authors on this Head: The most remarkable of which (to trouble You with no more) is that memorable and sagaci



ing of *Seneca*, in his Book *De Beneficiis*,-----*Quocunque Te flexeris, ibi Deum videbis occurrentem Tibi; nihil ab Illo vacat, nam Opus suum Ipse implet*; “which Way soever you turn, you are sure to meet with God; there is nothing void of Him, for he filleth all in all; agreeable to which is that Saying of the Poets, *Jovis omnia plena*.

To make a Distinction, therefore, between his Influence and his Essence, by supposing him Omnipresent in the one, and not in the other Respect, is not only false, but highly ridiculous. For shall we suppose the World to be greater than God that made it? Or that he can exert a Power beyond the Reach of his Being? This would be to confound the very Notion of Finite and Infinite, to ascribe the Dispensations  
of

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of Providence, to the mere Impres-  
sion of secondary Causes; and by  
Consequence, to render all Divine  
Worship and Religion useless and un-  
necessary. For if God be not every  
where present, how should he hear  
our Prayers, or take Notice of our  
Actions? And if he does not do this,  
to what Purpose are his Laws, or why  
should we oblige ourselves to the Ob-  
servation of them?

This, therefore, is a Point of the  
highest Consequence for us to believe,  
and rest upon, That as God is eve-  
ry where by his Power, through  
which, as the Apostle expresses it,  
*He worketh all in all*; so is he like-  
wise by his Essence, which cannot  
without the greatest Impiety, as well  
as Absurdity, be separated from it.  
So that though we cannot explain the  
particular Manner of his Presence, or

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Operations, it becomes us, however to put on the Modesty of Creatures, and still to remember, that our Faculties are finite and limited, and, therefore, cannot comprehend what is Boundless and Immense.

S E C T. III.

*His Independency.*

As to the *Independency* of God, which is the next Attribute ascribed to him, it seems to be so necessarily implied in the Notion of his Eternity, that I need only draw an Inference or two from That, for the Proof and Illustration of it. For as he is supposed to have existed from all Eternity before there was any other Being in the World: So 'tis impossible he should depend upon another for his; because that other must

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must then be necessarily pre-supposed, and consequently the Godhead, unless it were *Independent*, would neither be the First Cause, nor Eternal, as has been before demonstrated.

As God, therefore cannot depend upon any other for his Being, so neither can He for the Continuance, or Conservation, of it: Because he is not only Superior to all Things else, but having conferred on all whatever of Power or Strength they have; nothing can make any prevalent Impression upon Him, so as to destroy, or alter any Action, Purpose, or Decree, that can be said to belong to, or to flow from Him. For then He must be supposed to stand in Need of His Creatures, for their Concurrence in His Dispensations; the former of which would argue a Weakness, the latter a Defect; both which

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are utterly inconsistent with the Notion of a Deity. And for that Reason, though Men and other Creatures are often made Use of, as Instruments in the Hand of God, to bring about the Designs of His Providence, by the Distribution of temporal Rewards and Punishments in the World; yet this is no Argument of His Want of their Assistance, but rather of His Almighty Power and Wisdom, who, ordering all Things according to the Council of His own Mind, doth often make Choice, as St. Paul assures us, *1 Cor. i. 27. of the weak Things of the World to confound the Mighty, &c. that no Flesh may glory in His Presence.*

S E C T.

## S E C T. IV.

*His Immutability.*

The third and last of His *Incommunicable* Attributes is *Immutability*, by which is meant a Freedom from all Manner of Change or Inconstancy, and that both in Reference to His Existence, as being Eternal and Immortal, and to His Will, as He is an everlastingly Wise, Just, and Powerful Being, whose Councils and Decrees are like Himself, the *same Yesterday, To-Day, and for ever*. And for this we have the Testimony of Divine Revelation in many more Places of Scripture than, after those before cited, I have Occasion to mention. Thus we read, *Exodus* iii. 14. That the Name whereby He first made Himself known to the



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fort of His People, and the Terror of the *Egyptians*, their Oppressors, was, *I am that I am*. And again, *Mal. iii. 6. I am the Lord, and change not*. And the like again more expressly in *Isa. xiv. 24. Surely as I have thought, saith the Lord, so shall it come to pass, and as I purposed, so shall it stand. For as God is not a Man, that He should lie, or as the Son of Man, that He should repent.*

'Tis true, He is frequently mentioned in Scripture under this Notion, and particularly *Gen. vi. 6.* where 'tis said, that *it repented God that He had made Man upon the Earth*. But this, and the like Expressions in other Places of Scripture, are not so to be understood, as if God acted like *Men*, who fall upon new Methods when they are defeated and  
baffled

baffled in those they had before projected. With regard to which it is that when God changes the external Manner and Method of His Operations, the inspired Writers condescending to our inadequate Apprehensions, call it *Repentance*. Not that it really denotes any Alteration at all in the Council of God's Will, but only in the Manner of bringing it about. For, as He has different Ends in the same Action; so He can make even contrary Actions, (or, at least, such as seem so to us) to conspire to the same End.

In which Sense (as *Aquinas* borrowing his Notion from St. *Augustin* expresses it) *Mutationem quidem vult, sed Voluntatem suam nunquam mutat Deus*; the Meaning of which is that though God wills a Change, yet he never changes his Will. 'Tis true that  
the



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the Divine Promises are every where in Scripture represented to be upon the Condition of the *Sinner's Turning from the Evils of his Ways*, which is properly termed *Repentance*; but, as that is supposed to be on Man's Part only; so it cannot otherwise, than in a figurative Sense, be ascribed to God under that Denomination.

Nor is it at all consistent with Human Reason to suppose Him capable of it; for if He were, it must be either for the Better, or the Worse: It cannot be for the Better; because, being already possessed of all possible Perfection, there can be no Occasion of any such Change: And it is not to be imagined, without the highest Blasphemy, that so All-wise and Powerful a Being should ever change for the Worse. And, therefore, as the Divine *Plato* concludes upon

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upon the like Reasoning, Κάλλιστος καὶ ἄριστος ὧν εἰς τὸ δυνατὸν μένει ἄει ἀπλῶς καὶ τῇ αὐτῇ μορφῇ.---*That He always continues simply and absolutely the same.* And *Seneca* agrees with Him in the like Assertion.

But what Need is there of Human Testimonies upon so self-evident a Point, which is beyond the Rules and Power of Right Reason to refuse its Assent to? Can we ascribe that to God, which is a manifest Weakness and Imperfection in Ourselves; or imagine Him capable of Inconstancy and Mutability in His Divine Dispositions, which we cannot but own is a Contradiction to His very Nature? And which, besides the notorious Indignity and Reproach it must necessarily bring upon all His other Excellencies, would subvert the very Foundation of our Faith and Fear, as

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well

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well as of our Hope, and Affiance in Him, which must of Course be the Consequence of it. For if His Power and Justice were precarious, and uncertain, His Threatnings would in a great Measure lose their Awe and Influence upon us : And if His Truth and Faithfulness could fail, no Promises or Declarations, how gracious soever, could be any firm Ground for our Trust and Confidence in his Word.

Upon the whole therefore, it is, and must still be our Duty, notwithstanding all the Vicissitudes and seeming Inconstancies that appear in the Management of Human Affairs, to believe them (as they really are) to be the Product of the steady and uniform Council of the Almighty, who for Reasons too deep and hidden for our scanty Capacity to fathom, changes

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changes the Times, and Seasons, and  
Transactions of Things, as is most  
agreeable to His own Divine Decrees,  
without any the least Variation in  
Himself.

### S E C T. V.

Having thus far taken a View of  
His *Incommunicable Attributes*, I come  
next to consider those others which are  
stiled *Communicable*, as being in some  
lower Degree, by Way of Participa-  
tion, communicated to Mankind, tho'  
in Eminence and Perfection they are  
peculiarly appropriated to God Him-  
self.

But since 'tis above our Capacities  
to apprehend these Divine Properties  
in so transcendent a Manner as he  
possesses them, but only so far as He  
is pleased to communicate them to  
us; all the Estimate we can take of

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them, must be by such Rules, and from such Ideas as we make use of in judging of these Perfections in ourselves; still making this just Allowance, that as Ours are relative and limited, so His must be Absolute and Infinite. And as all the Excellency we can apprehend in a Rational Being must belong either to the Understanding, the Will, or the Operations that flow from them; so all these Perfections whereby we are said to resemble God, are properly referred to those three Heads I before mentioned.

*His Knowledge and Wisdom.*

The first of which is *Wisdom*, which relates more particularly to the Divine Understanding, and may be considered under a twofold Notion,  
*viz,*

*viz.* Either, First, as it denotes a perfect Comprehension of the Nature of all Things, with the several Powers, Qualities and Circumstances of them, and then 'tis call'd *Knowledge*; Or, as it implies the skilful ordering and disposing of all these to the best Ends and Purposes in the Government of the World, which is more properly and strictly termed *Wisdom*. The former considers Things absolutely in themselves; the latter, the Respects and Relations they bear one to another, under the Notion of Means and End.

Now tho' there is nothing more evident, both from Scripture and Reason, than that this universal Knowledge and Wisdom is to be attributed to God without any Limitation; yet such is the Pride and Petulance of hu-

man Reason, that every Age has afforded Instances of Gainfayers to this Truth, who have presumptuously endeavoured to rob him of his Omniscience, or Providence in some Respects; by representing it as a Thing either beyond his Reach to see and observe the Actions of his Creatures, or below his Greatness to concern himself in the Management of them.-----They will allow him perhaps to have a general View of the Great and Weighty Affairs of States and Kingdoms, but not to descend to the minute Survey of the Thoughts and Actions of particular Persons, which are usually attended with such a Variety of hidden Circumstances, as are beyond their own Power to pry into; and therefore they are apt to say within themselves, *Tush, the Lord doth.*

*doth not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard us.*

To obviate the fallacious Arguments that are usually urged in Favour of these Opinions, and shew the Absurdity of them, let me first observe, that as Knowledge or Wisdom is the highest Perfection of a rational Nature, so there is nothing can more eclipse, or cast a greater Blemish on the Divine, than to suppose God, in the least Degree, or in any Kind, subject to Ignorance and Weakness, as those who deny his Omniscience must implicitly do.

For, if his Knowledge were only as ours is, in Part, it would neither be universal, distinct, nor infallible; and, by Consequence, must imply those Defects which would not only destroy the Nature of absolute Perfection, but extinguish the Light of  
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heaven, and turn the Brightness of its Glory into the Image, or Shadow of Death. His Power and his Providence, with the Rest of his Divine Perfections, if not founded on a comprehensive Knowledge, and directed by an unerring Wisdom, would all sink of course and be disregarded. For without this there would be no Council nor Order in the producing of Effects, no Provision for future Events, nor any Government of the World.

And as to the other Part of the Objection, that it is below his Greatness, or inconsistent with his Happiness, to take care of these inferior Beings and Things here below, as it proceeds from a Misapprehension of the Divine Wisdom, as if it were capable of being embarrassed or confounded by the various Natures and Num-

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Numbers of Things; so 'tis no less absurd in the Consequences that are deduced from it. For if God be above the Care of His Creatures, why was He not likewise above the Pains of creating them? And if it is an Injury to his Deity to be put to the Trouble of governing them, it would sure be much greater to suppose Him so unkind and unjust, as to give them Being only to expose them to Chance.

The Reason why Men are so short-sighted and fallible in their Apprehension and Judgment of Things, is because their Knowledge is only by *Succession*, and *in Part*, and every New Event or Occurrence that arises, either improves or confounds it. But as to Him, who beholds all Things (as has been proved) in one View, both Past, Present, and to come, and whose Attention cannot be in-

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terrupted

terrupted by the Intricacy, or Multiplicity of Affairs, He is above the Danger of any Surprise or Disappointment; and therefore can never be uneasy or unhappy in His Administration. *For known unto God are all his Works from the Beginning of the World.* Acts xv. 8. *He also is wise, and there is no Wisdom, nor Understanding, nor Council, against the Lord.* Prov. xxi. 30. *For his Eyes are upon the Ways of Man, and He seeth all his Goings,* Job. xxxiv. 22. *Neither is there any Creature that is not manifest in His Sight; but all Things are naked, and open to the Eyes of Him, with whom we have to do.* Heb. iv. 13.

Numberless Testimonies might be brought from the Heathen Writers, to confirm the Truth of this: Their Books are full of Expressions of their  
Ad-

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Admiration of God's Omniscience, as well as of His Wisdom in the Government of the World. *Arrian*, in his Comments on *Epiſtetus*, tells us, that every one ought to be perſuaded of this, ὅτι ἕκαστον τῶν πραττομένων ἐφορᾶται ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ that every Thing done by Men is ſeen by God. *Quis enim*, ſays *Cicero*, *non timeat Deum omnia pervidentem, cogitantem, & animadvertentem.*

And as God's Knowledge is Infinite in the Extent, ſo it is likewise in the Manner of its Comprehension, having this peculiar Excellency, that it penetrates into the hidden Thoughts and Contrivances of Men, and diſcovers the ſecret Deſigns and Intentions of their Hearts. *For the righteous God*, ſays the *Pſalmiſt*, *trieth the very Heart*

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*and Reins, and understands our Thoughts afar off; He sets our Misdeeds before him, and our secret Sins in the Light of his Countenance.*  
Pf. xc. 8.

And tho' the Scripture had not revealed this so plainly to us, yet 'tis natural and necessary to suppose, that He, who first endued his Creatures with their several Powers and Activities, must needs be acquainted with the Motions and Inclinations of them, and that there can be no such Thing as Secrecy and Retirement from an Eye that is every where present, and a Knowledge that pierceth into all Things. *Nihil Deo clausum est*, says Seneca, *interest animis nostris, & cogitationibus mediis intervenit.*----We can keep nothing close or secret from God, for He is present in our Minds, and intimate to our very Thoughts.  
And,



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And, therefore, needs no ministring Spirits to inform Him of our Consultations; nor can he be deceived in the Judgment He makes of them.

But to bring this Point yet nearer Home to Ourselves: It is a Matter of Fact we are but too apt to glory and pride ourselves in, that great Numbers of our Fellow Creatures are by Nature endued with such Quickness of Apprehension and Penetration of Judgment, as by the occasional Advantages of a learned Education, enables them to pry into the Series of Causes and Effects; to tell the Number and Motion of the Stars and distinguish the several Species of Animals and Plants by their Names and Qualities; to discourse of the Interests and Intrigues of States and Kingdoms, and give an exact Account of the Laws and Constitutions

stitutions by which they are governed :----- And shall not God Himself have an infinitely more Distinct and Comprehensive Knowledge of all these? Certainly he must ; otherwise the Things that are made would be no less Excellent and Powerful than He that made them, and He must have endued us with Perfections equal to Himself.

*Take heed, therefore, says Holy David, ye unwise among the People, O ye Fools, when will ye understand? He that planteth the Ear, shall be not hear; or He that made the Eye shall be not see; or he that teacheth Man Knowledge, shall not be know?* This is a Consequence so rational and undeniable, that those Philosophers of old, who denied the Providence of God in the Management of Human Affairs, could not pretend to

to argue or dispute against it. And, therefore, to make their Opinion the more plausible, they were put under a Necessity of asserting the Eternity and Self-Existence of the World. Not that they had any Grounds in Reason to believe it; but purely to avoid the Absurdity of granting an Almighty Creator, that should be either Ignorant or Negligent of the Work of His own Hands.

I have insisted the longer upon this Attribute, because of the great Opposition it meets with from Men of corrupt Minds, and the dangerous Consequence of others being drawn into the like Error by their Example. For if once the Sense of God's knowing our Thoughts and Actions be lost, the Rest of His Divine Attributes will only serve to embolden Men in an open Violation an



tempt of His Laws, till at last they provoke him to assert his Omniscience by his Justice, when they shall too late discover that he knew their Sins, by the Punishment he inflicts upon them.

## S E C T. VI.

### *His Holiness and Goodness.*

The next of His *Communicable* Attributes is *Holiness*, which relates to the Divine Will, and may be also considered two Ways, Either 1<sup>st</sup>, as it is an essential Property, whereby he is infinitely holy, pure, and perfect in himself; or, 2<sup>dly</sup>, as it implies a Tendency to communicate those Divine Perfections to his Creatures, according to their several Ranks and Capacities in Life; and then

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then 'tis stiled *Goodness*. That *Holiness* belongs to God in the first Sense, is so fundamental a Notion, and so universally agreed to, that I need not go about to prove it. 'Tis the first and brightest Ray of the Deity, the Foundation of all Worship and Adoration, and so essential to His Being, that to imagine a God without it, were to imagine Him without That, which chiefly constitutes Him what He is.

And that it ought also to be ascribed to Him under the Title of *Goodness*, when duly considered, admits of as little Doubt. For as God is originally and essentially Good in Himself, so is he the Fountain, the Author, the Rule and Measure from whom all created Goodness is derived, and by Conformity to which it is to

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be estimated. And 'tis for this Reason we find that *Goodness*, in this Sense of the Word, is so singularly appropriated to Him, by Christ himself, that he tells His Disciples, *There is none Good but One, that is God.* Mark xviii. 19.

Many and various are the Ways by which he has been pleased, thro' all Ages, to manifest this Goodness to Mankind, and still continues to do so ; which need not but just be named to demand our Assent to, and Acknowledgment of them. ----- His endowing us with rational and immortal Souls, capable of distinguishing between Good and Evil, and of being made for ever happy with Him in the Enjoyment of a future State : ----- His sending his beloved Son (when we had forfeited a Title to that State  
by

by our first Parents Transgression) to redeem and restore us to it;---His vouchsafing us a standing Revelation of his Divine Will, to instruct us in the Means and Terms of Salvation by Him, and enabling us, by the powerful Influence of his Holy Spirit, to discharge our several Duties in such a Manner as he is in Mercy pleased to accept of;-----are all of them such amazing Instances of his Goodness and Loving-Kindness to us, that we may justly join with the Royal Psalmist in that pathetick Ejaculation---*Lord! what is Man that thou hast such Respect unto him, or the Son of Man, that thou so regardest him.*

Nor are the merciful Dispensations of his Providence to all Sorts and Conditions of Men, even in the Midst of the highest Provocations and Of-

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fences against Him, a less remarkable Instance of it than the former. *For he maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust: He comforts the Feeble-minded, supports the Weak, relieves the Necessitous, and delivers the Oppressed* from all the mischievous Effects that the Fraud and Malice, or Cruelty of their Enemies, have unjustly levelled against them. So that as *Seneca*, in his fourth Book *de Ben.* observes, “there is no Person so wicked, or  
“miserable in Life, who hath not  
“in several Respects, had Experi-  
“ence of the Divine Bounty, as Oc-  
“casions required.”

Nor is it any Limitation of God's Goodness in this Respect, that some Men, who are *given over to a reprobate Mind*, are excluded from it, any  
more

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more than it is of His Power, to say that He cannot sin, or do any thing that is contradictory to His Nature and Will. For to continue the Offers of his Grace and Favour towards Persons not capable of becoming *Good*, is altogether inconsistent with the infinite Purity and Holiness of God, who *abhors Iniquity*, and has promised to execute his Judgments on all such as are rebellious, and *will not obey the Truth and Sanctity of his Laws*. But this, I say, is no just Objection to the Universality of this Attribute, which, like the Rest of His Divine Excellencies, is Invariable and Eternal in itself, tho' the Infidel and profane Part of Mankind have frustrated the Design of it, and perverted it to their own Destruction.

That it is equally offered and extended



tended to all, is what they themselves (after the many gracious Calls they have from Time to Time had to Repentance and Reformation, and the inward Checks and Reproaches of their own Minds for their repeated rejecting of them) cannot pretend to deny. As God therefore can by no Means be charged with any Defect on His Part, by inward Admonitions and Reproofs, to bring them to a better Sense of their Duty; so 'tis entirely owing to their own Obstinacy and Perverseness in this Respect, who, by despising and abusing the Means of Grace he offers for the Attainment of Salvation, forfeit their Title to its Rewards, and become the wilful Authors of their own Ruin, in the dreadful Punishments that attend the Neglect of it. I might farther enlarge on the Mercy and Love of

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God to Mankind in this Particular ;  
but this being only a Branch of His  
Goodness, and included in the gene-  
ral Notion I have here given of it. I  
proceed to the Consideration of-----

S E C T. VII.

*His Truth and Justice.*

These are two other Attributes  
essential to the Divine Will, and ad-  
mit likewise of a twofold Accep-  
tation : Either first in *Word*, as it  
implies a Congruity of his Precepts  
and Promises to his Divine Inten-  
tions, and then 'tis called *Truth*;  
Or, 2dly, in *Deed*, as it signifies  
the Rewarding or Punishing his Crea-  
tures according to the Quality and  
Desert of their Actions, which is  
properly stiled *Power*. And that  
both



both these ought to be ascribed to God absolutely, and in the highest Degree, is no less evident both from Scripture and Reason, than the former.

As to the first, whether we consider the Precepts and Laws, or the Promises and Threatnings contained in the Scriptures, there are so many Proofs and Testimonies of the Faithfulness and Veracity of the Divine Author of them, that it would be endless to descend to Particulars. 'Tis from hence he is emphatically stil'd by *Moses* and the Prophets, *The God of Truth*; and his Word, *The Law of Truth*. And in the *New Testament* we are told---That *he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life*. Jo. xiv. 6. That *his Judgments are according to Truth*. Rom. ii. 2. And that *he leads us by his Spirit into all Truth*.  
Jo. xvi.

Jo. xvi. 13. And our own Reason plainly informs us, that as Error and Falshood are an Argument, not only of Imperfection, but of the greatest Baseness; the reproachful Quality of the worst of Men, and of the Devil himself, the *Father of Lies*; it would be the highest Affront and Indignity on our Part, not to separate it at the greatest Distance from God, whose Perfections set Him absolutely free from the least Probability, or Suspicion of it.

The Reason why *Men* are so often subject to falsify and break their Words, is either from the Weakness and Depravity of their Nature, the Fear of some Evil, or the Hope of some Advantage: But God, who is infinitely Wise, and All-sufficient, has Nothing of that Kind to put Him upon it. His *Omniscience* se-

Q

cures

cures Him from being deceived Himself ; His *Omnipotence* from standing in Need of deceiving others, and His *Goodness* from the very Appearance of any Inclination to it.

And that God is also *just* in all His *Actions*, so as to reward, or punish His Creatures according to their Deserts, must needs be universally assented to, as necessarily flowing from that rational Notion we have of him ; that He is the great Sovereign Lord and Judge of the World, who is *righteous in all His Ways*, as well as *holy in all his Works* ; and that as *Mercy and Truth* are said to go before Him, so *Justice and Judgment* are the *Habitation of his Seat*. Ps. lxxxix. 14.

The *Socinians*, indeed, (whose Business it is to overturn the Satisfaction

faction of Christ's Merits, as well as the Divinity of His Person) have raised a frivolous Objection against this Attribute, *viz.* " That it is not  
 " absolutely essential to the Divine Na-  
 " ture to punish Sin, or require Sa-  
 " tisfaction for it; but that it is not  
 " only the Effect of His Free-Will,  
 " which he may suspend, or dispense  
 " with if he pleases.'---'But to this  
 it may be undeniably answered, that  
 tho' God may, and often does par-  
 don the Offences and Transgressions  
 of His People, and whilst there is  
 any Prospect of Amendment, remits  
 or defers the Punishment they de-  
 serve, (*for His Mercy is over all His  
 Works*, and it would be Presump-  
 tion in us to set Bounds to it:) Yet  
 the Nature of Sin in itself is so very  
 repugnant to the Purity of His Will,  
 and the Sanctity of his Laws, that

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He cannot be supposed, without the greatest Absurdity, ever to allow of or connive at it; especially considering the express Declarations he has made to the contrary, *That there shall no Evil dwell with him; and that though Hand join in Hand, the Wicked shall not go unpunished.* Prov. xi. 21.

And for that Reason, tho' the full, compleat, and glorious Manifestation of his Justice be reserved to the great Day of Retribution, *when the Secrets of all Hearts shall be disclos'd, and every Man receive Sentence according to his Works;* yet that He may not *leave himself without Witness*, in this Life, and that we may be fully convinced there *is a God that judges in the Earth;* He takes frequent Occasions to demonstrate the Glory of his Justice  
to



THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES. 125

to the World in the Present outward Recompences of Virtue, as well as the visible Punishments of Vice.

For what Good Man is there, that has not various Experiences of God's Temporal Mercies and Favours bestowed upon Him, either in a constant Course of Prosperity in his worldly Affairs, or, upon an Adverse Turn of (what we call) Fortune, in a comfortable Support under them, and in his own due Time a happy Deliverance from the Calamities and Afflictions that are brought upon him by it? Whilst the Libertine and Presumptuous Sinner, whose Lot it is for the most Part to be visited with distinguished Evils and Misfortunes remarkably suited to his Crimes, is perpetually tormented with the Remorses of his own Conscience, that haunt and pursue him thro' various  
Scenes

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Scenes of Anxiety and Despair, till having no Place or Person to fly to for Relief, he is apt in many Instances, to grow weary of his Life and the World, and resolutely bent to bid a final Adieu to both by laying Violent Hands upon himself.

But tho' the contrary should happen (as it often does) that he should continue to enjoy all the Affluence and Prosperity that this World can afford him; be *promoted to Great Honours*, have *Abundance of Lands and Riches in Possession*, and be gratified with *every Thing that his Soul lusteth after*: Yet this is no Argument of the Inequality of God's Justice, who will sooner or later make him sensible, that these temporal Splendors and Enjoyments he so much delights in, and values himself upon, are but decoying Snares laid  
in

in his Way, by the infernal Spirit, to tempt him to his own Destruction; and that God will hereafter *bring him to Judgment for them*, when he will not fail to *render to every Man his due* at his future Tribunal; *when the Wickedness of the Wicked shall be executed upon him*; and the Righteousness of the Just be established and rewarded.

Many Testimonies might here be produced from several of the Heathen Authors, and particularly from *Seneca*, in his *Epistle on this Head*; but as this is a Subject so fully and frequently treated of in so many accurate Discourses from the Prefs, as well as the Pulpit, and so abundantly dictated and enforced in all Parts of the Holy Scriptures; more especially by the Royal Prophet, in his 37th and 73d Psalm (which are mostly taken



up with an emphatical Vindication of the Divine Providence in this Respect,) I need only refer my Reader to them for a satisfactory Conviction of the Truth and Certainty of it.

### S E C T. VIII.

#### *His Power and Dominion.*

The last of these *Communicable* Attributes I mentioned is *Power*, which is equally essential to the Notion of God, with Respect to his Divine Faculties of Acting and Executing whatever He thinks fit for the Good of Mankind, and the Manifestation of His own Glory. And this likewise may be considered either 1<sup>st</sup>, absolutely, as it signifies an Almighty, Irresistible Authority, and Ability in the Divine Being, to do  
*whatever*

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*whatever He pleases both in Heaven and in Earth*; or 2dly, Relatively, as it implies a Sovereign Right and Dominion over all His Creatures, to govern and dispose of them in such a Manner, as is most agreeable to His own Will, and the Laws and Rules He has prescribed to them as the Measure of their Actions. For since He is not dependent upon, nor accountable to any for what He does; so His Power must be Supreme, and by Consequence not capable of being check'd or controul'd: and since all Creatures owe their Being, as well as their Subsistence to Him, He must certainly have an absolute Claim to all the awful Reverence and Subjection they can possibly pay to Him.

As to the first, it is a Truth so rational and evident, that it is, we find, universally acknowledged and attributed to Him even by the Heathens themselves. Thus *Plato* styles him τῶν πάντων Ἡγγεμόνα; and *Cicero* to the same Effect *Omnium Rerum Dominum*. And if we look into the Holy Scriptures for Testimonies on this Head, we find they every where abound with Variety of lofty Expressions to that Purpose, styling him *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*. To which also may be referred all those Divine Doxologies, in which Power and Dominion are emphatically ascribed to him, and that in an unbounded and infinite Degree.—But abstracting from these, tho' no written Testimony could be produced for this Attribute, yet the stupendous

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dous Creation and Fabrick of the World, and the many mighty and wonderful Works he has from Age to Age manifested in over-ruling, directing, and managing all Things therein (as has been shewed) is an undeniable and sufficient Demonstration of it.

But this will yet more fully appear if we consider the *absolute Necessity* of such a Power. For so Violent and Eager are the Desires, so Fierce and Unruly the Lusts and Passions of Men, that, if there was not an invincible, All-powerful Hand to bridle and over-rule them, there would be no longer any living with Safety and Comfort in the World; but inconceivable Mischiefs, Convulsions, and Distractions of every Kind would overspread and cover the Face of the whole Earth. That this was

the Opinion of that Great and Good Emperor *M. Antoninus*, appears from that just and remarkable Question he puts to himself in his excellent Treatise *de Seipso*, ----- Τί μοι ζῆν ἐν Κοσμῷ κενῷ Θεῷ ἢ Προνοίᾳς κενῷ.  
 ----*What doth it avail me to live in a World void of God, or void of the Inspection of his Providence?*---which he thought necessary to regulate and keep it in order. Without this the Divine Knowledge would be but an airy Speculation, and His Wisdom useless and of none Effect: For to what Purpose (as was before observ'd) should he know our Affairs, if he has not Power to manage and direct them, or prescribe Laws to his Creatures, if he could not enforce a due Obedience to them,

This, indeed, is one of those Attributes

butes that he has been pleased in Part to communicate to Men; for *'tis by him that Kings reign, and Princes decree Justice*; having a Power vested in them to make Laws and Statutes, and Ordinances of several Sorts, for the better Governing the People committed to their Charge; such as they judge are most suitable to the political State, and publick Good of the several Communities over which they preside. But as all this is infinitely inferior to that of the Almighty Sovereign, from whom they receive it; so it does and must fall far short of answering these Ends, without the Interposal of God's particular Providence to support, direct, and prosper them, in the Course and Management of their civil Administration.

For as to Human Laws in general,  
'tis

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'tis but too evident that there is only a small Part of our Duty which they can reach to; That which God looks most upon; *i. e.* the inward Acts of the Mind, they can make no Provision for; and even with Regard to those outward Acts that fall under their Cognizance, they are liable to be many Ways corrupted, both in the Application and Execution of them. In a Word, the Power and the Laws of Men are much of the same Nature and Extent with the Knowledge of the Lawgivers: Of which it may justly be said,---*Tam Illa falli facilis, quam ista contemni*; that the one is subject to Error, the other to Contempt. 'Tis only the Inspection of God, whose Omniscience can't be deluded, his Judgment perverted, nor his Power controuled; that is  
sufficient



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sufficient to put an effectual Restraint  
upon the Transgressors of them.

There is indeed, another Law,  
that I mean of the *Mind* or *Con-*  
*science*, which is placed in the Bosom  
of every Man, and which, if it were  
duly and constantly attended to, would  
be a faithful Monitor, and an excel-  
lent Guide to us in the Course and  
Conduct of our Lives. But as this  
too, is necessarily founded in that  
higher Principle of the Knowledge  
of God ; so its Efficacy seems chief-  
ly, if not entirely to depend upon it.  
'Tis on that Account we find the  
Heathen Orator (who calls *Conscience*  
*the God within us*, and magnifies it  
for the Power it has to restrain Man  
from acting or saying what he dares  
not publicly own) still lays the Stress  
of all upon *this*, “ That we are  
“ every Minute seen by the Eye of  
“ the

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“ the Almighty from above, who  
“ is not only the Witness, but is  
“ hereafter to be the Judge and  
“ Rewarder of our Actions.”

But could the Apprehension and Dread of this be once stifled, or evaded by an imaginary Notion of Secrecy and Concealment; if the All-penetrating Eye of God could be eluded and escaped like that of our Fellow-Creatures, we should soon find by Experience the fatal Consequence of it. That there would then be no more Conscience made of Publick, than is now of Private Sins. The first Transgression we are told, that ever was committed in the World, brought no Remorse along with it, till the Voice and Presence of the Almighty awakened the Guilt of Conscience in the Offender; but when once it was perceived

ceived that God *knew it*, then says  
*Adam, I was afraid. Gen. iii. 10.*

From all which it is beyond Contradiction evident, that as the firm Belief of the Divine Omniscience is absolutely necessary to deter Men from Sin, and keep them steady to their Duty in every Branch of it; so is it likewise with regard to this Attribute of the Omnipotent Power of God, to execute His Judgments upon Presumptuous Sinners, and do every Thing He wills and ordains to be done to that End; which, though 'tis the Last here mentioned, is the Highest and most Effectual Sanction and Enforcement of all the Rest.

It must, indeed, be owned there are some Things which God cannot do; such as either in themselves imply a Contradiction, or are repug-

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nant

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nant to the Nature of His Divine Perfections. But this is so far from a Limitation of the Infinity of His Power, that it is rather a distinguished Excellence and Privilege of it. For as the Power of every Agent is to be measured from the proper Objects it is exercised upon ; so the Universality of God's Power being wholly exercised about such Things as are essentially Right and Good, and proper to be done ; it cannot be supposed to extend to any such Acts as are either naturally, or morally Irregular, Inconsistent, or Unjust ; such as to make a Man a Brute, or Himself a Liar ; to impose Laws upon His Creatures that are absolutely beyond their Ability to perform, or punish them for what they do not deserve, or have not in their Power to help : For this would be to overturn both

His

His own Nature and ours, and contradict the Eternal Laws of His Wisdom and Justice by which He governs the World.

Some Things, no Doubt there are which may seem *impossible* with Men, which yet the Scripture tells us are *possible with God, Who is able to do above all that we can think, or devise.* But these are only called Impossibilities with Respect to the Narrowness of our Understanding, and therefore, tho' in that Sense they may be said to be above Reason, yet (as has been all along observed in like Cases) they are by no Means contrary to it.

And this brings me to the other Branch of his Power I mentioned, to wit, the absolute *Dominion* and Jurisdiction He has over His Creatures, to command or prohibit, reward or

punish, as *seemeth good unto Him*; which being equally agreeable to the Natural, as well as Reveal'd Idea we have of God, is no less necessary to be ascribed to Him, than the Former. For whether we consider the Superlative Eminence of His Nature, or our necessary Dependance upon Him for every Thing we have, and enjoy in the World, there is nothing can be more reasonable than that He should have a Power to overrule and govern us in all Things as His Divine Will directs, and that, as *we are His People, and Sheep of His Pasture*, we should submit ourselves, in all Things to His Pleasure and Disposal, with a becoming Patience and Resignation to it.

Many Testimonies might be brought from the Heathen Writers, as well as the Holy Scriptures, to evidence their concurrent

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concurrent Opinion on this Head :  
 But after so many Quotations already  
 made from both to the like Purpose,  
 it will be sufficient to mention that  
 remarkable and pathetick Declara-  
 tion of King *Nebuchadnezzar*, when  
 his Understanding was restored to him  
 after the Doom God passed upon  
 him, of being driven to associate and  
 take his Food among the Beasts of  
 the Field) as we find it recorded by  
 the Prophet *Daniel*, ch. iv. ver. 34,  
 35, viz. *That His Dominion is an*  
*everlasting Dominion, that He does*  
*according to His Will in the Armies of*  
*Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of*  
*the Earth, and none may stay his*  
*Hand, or say unto him, what dost*  
*thou?* A Confession so fully expres-  
 sive of God's absolute Sovereignty  
 over the whole World, that it will be  
 altogether



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altogether unnecessary to enlarge any farther upon it.

I have but one Thing more to add, by Way of Caution on this important Head, namely, That as *we* are *not to examine too nicely* into the Manner, or Method, by which God exercises this Authority over us; so neither are we to set Bounds to it, or determine how far it may be extended, either here, or hereafter. 'Tis sufficient for us to know and believe, that the only Rule and Measure of both, is that of His Wisdom and Justice, which He neither can, nor will, in any Respect, act contrary to. And; therefore, tho' His Dispensations in this Life are many Times promiscuous and uncertain; not only in the Case of particular Persons, but likewise in the publick Events of States and Kingdoms; yet

'tis

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'tis necessary for the Vindication of His Providence in the Universal Opinion of the Heathen, as well as the Christian World, that there shall be a future State of Accounts in another Life, where His Authority and Dominion will be more remarkably and illustriously displayed, and every Man be brought to acknowledge,  
*That verily there is a Reward for the Righteous, doubtless there is a God that ruleth over and judgeth the Earth.*





PRACTICAL INFERENCES  
REMARKS and EXHORTATIONS

On the forgoing Heads.

AVING now given you  
a comprehensive View of  
the several Divine Attri-  
butes in as clear and distinct a Man-  
ner as the Sublimity and Abstruse-  
ness of the Subject would allow me  
to do ; I proceed next to draw such  
*Practical Inferences, Remarks, and*  
*Exhortations*, from each of them,  
as are most proper to influence our  
Wills and Affections to the Perform-  
ance of our respective Duties to the  
Almighty

Almighty Being in whom they are invested.

To open the Way to this it may not be improper to observe, That as it is natural for Men to proportion their Esteem of Things according to the Worth and Dignity which they apprehend to be in them; so it is beyond Contradiction evident, that a Being, which has in it all possible Perfection, may justly challenge all the Honour, Esteem, and Veneration that can possibly be paid to it.

In order to which, if we run over all the several Attributes of God in our Thoughts, (as they have been before explained and proved) and, comparing Him with the best of his Creatures, consider the vast Difference and Disproportion there is between them and their Creator, we shall the more readily be induced,

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and

and the more strongly obliged to the Acknowledgment and Performance of the several Duties resulting from them.

The Dictates of our natural Reason and Experience inform us, that all other Beings and Things in the World had, at one Time or other, a Beginning of their Existence; and will, or at least may, if he pleases, have an End of it too: But He, who (as St. *John* tells us is Alpha and Omega, *the Beginning and the End* of all Things, is Himself without either.---All other Beings must acknowledge an Infinite Superior, from which they had their Original, and on which they have their Dependance: But He alone owes His Being to none, nor is indebted to any for the Continuance of it.

All

All His Creatures here below are subject to Alteration and Change, Corruption and Decay; are capable of some Accession to their Natures, of possessing more than they already have, and of knowing more than they at present understand. But with Him, whose Style is, *I am what I am, there is no Variation nor Shadow of Turning*. For He Himself is the Fountain and Completion of all Happiness and Glory, and therefore cannot receive an Addition of either. He is the Abyss and Fulness of all Riches, and Wisdom, and Power, that can be ascribed to Him, and therefore cannot more perfectly enjoy what he has from all Eternity possessed, nor see and know more than he has in like Manner comprehended, to whom all Times and all

Things, both past, and to come, are always present.

And the like has been observed of all his other Attributes; for as the Wise Man speaks) *as is His Majesty so is His Mercy* and Truth, His Justice and Holiness infinitely Great infinitely Amiable, and infinitely Worthy of all our Worship and Obedience, than which nothing sure can more effectually work upon our Reason, or engage our Affections to the Discharge of these Duties to Him. For if we are persuaded, as the *Psalmist* was, that *there is none in Heaven or in Earth comparable to God* in any Respect, we cannot but be disposed and excited to say with him, *Lord, whom have we in Heaven but Thee, and there is none upon Earth that we ought to desire in Comparison of Thee.*

It



It was upon this, as the proper Foundation of that true Wisdom upon which the Fear and Love of God is built, and by which it is upheld, that the Primitive Christians, whose Memories we so much celebrate, arrived to what passes with us for an unimitable Pitch of Piety. They placed their chief Happiness in the Contemplation of God Himself, and borrowing Lustre as it were from the Rays of His Divinity, shone forth in Virtues and Graces so bright and transcendent, as to become a Light to the whole Christian Church, which, those of later Ages, *who set not God before them*, have, alas! but too little Regard to. Hence that strong Faith, that constant Hope, that chearful Confidence they reposed in Him; and hence also that entire Submission of their Understandings

to his Divine Word, and Resignation of their Will to his Good Pleasure therein set forth, did undoubtedly flow.

Which leads me to consider more particularly, as I proposed, the several Inferences, Remarks, and Exhortations, that naturally arise from the Contemplation of the Divine Essence and Attributes, in the same Order and Method as was before observed in the Explication of them.

## S E C T. I.

*On His Infinity, Immensity, &c.*

As to his *Incommunicable Attributes*, whereby God doth infinitely transcend all other Beings, as they are naturally apt to work in us the highest Esteem and Admiration of  
him,

him, so they should oblige us on all Occasions to express our *Adoration* and *Worship* towards him. This the very Heathens themselves, through all the Darknes of their Error and Superstition, could not but perceive and acknowledge. For to them as the Apostle St. *Paul* expresses it, *the Invisible Things of God were clearly seen, being understood by the Things that were made, even his Eternal Power and Godhead.* Rom. i. 20.

They easily discovered the Being of a Deity, and then necessarily concluded that what enjoyed these glorious Perfections must needs be ador'd; that a Being of such Greatness and Majesty must needs command Fear and Reverence, Worship and Obedience. “*Deus celitur, says Seneca,*  
“*propter Majestatem eximiam, sin-*  
“*gular*

“*gula remque Naturam*, --- God is  
 “ therefore worshipped because of  
 “ his Excellent Majesty and Incom-  
 “ parable Nature.” And *Aristotle*  
 asserts that “ whosoever denies or  
 “ doubts of this, ought not to be  
 “ dealt with by Arguments, but Pu-  
 “ nishments.”

And if the *Gentiles*, notwithstanding the Darkness they lay under, could yet discern their Obligation to worship and obey him, whom they called their Lord, how strangely stupid and inexcusable should we be who enjoy the glorious Light of the Gospel, if we did not in a more eminent Manner acknowledge the Connexion between that Title and our Duty? Especially since it is so expressly required of us, that *we should give the Lord the Honour due to his Name, and worship him with holy*  
*Worship;*

*Worship; that, we should not only glorify God in our Bodies, but also in our Spirits, which are God's. 1 Cor. vi. 20. For as God is a Spirit, so they that worship Him, must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. John iv. 24.*

By which we are plainly and expressly to understand, that it is not only requisite we should testify our Reverence and Respect to his Divine Majesty by External Gestures and Obeisances; by bowing our Heads, lifting up our Hands, and bending our Knees before him; or by exercising our Tongues in magnifying his Name, and *making his Praise to be glorious* in the solemn Assemblies of the Saints round about us; but that we should likewise glorify him in our Hearts and Affections, and by an inward Zeal of Piety and Devotion, invoke his gracious Assistance in our Necess-

ties of every Kind, and pay our grateful Acknowledgments of Praise and Thanksgiving for the many Favours and Blessings we have already received.

And what is yet of as great or greater Importance than any of the Rest, since the highest Glory a Creature can give to his Maker is by endeavouring to be like him ; 'tis more especially incumbent on us to testify our Veneration for him, by conforming our Lives and Actions to his Divine Perfections, as far as our present frail State will Admit of an Imitation of them.---For the better Acceptance of all which Duties, that we may not forfeit his Grace and Favour by our frequent Deviations from them, 'tis still farther necessary, that we should humble ourselves before him by repeated Acts  
of

of Contrition and Repentance, which as it is a just Acknowledgment of his Holiness, who hates Sin, and of his Justice that will punish it; so is it likewise of his Mercy, which is ready to pardon it; for *'tis the Glory of God to pass by our Transgressions.*

These are in short the several Sorts of Divine Worship, by which we are to express the Honour and Esteem that is due to God on Account of those transcendent Excellencies that are primarily ascribed to him. In the Performance of which we are especially to take Care, that they be always accompanied with a hearty Zeal and Indignation against all such Actions, Persons, and Things, as do in any Respect reflect Dishonour upon the Almighty; that we do not offend his Majesty by Ostentation and Vain Glory, nor rob

him of his Honour, by ascribing those Titles and Degrees of Worship to any Creature which are due to him alone. For as God is Infinite in Knowledge, and will not suffer himself to be imposed on by Shew and Appearance; so is he likewise jealous of his Honour, and therefore will not permit his Glory to be given to another in any Respect, either *directly*, by paying Divine Homage to Images and Relicks (which is notoriously practised in the Church of Rome,) or *indirectly*, by placing our Confidence in, or our Affections upon any Thing else in Preference, or Prejudice to him.

What a high Provocation then must they be guilty of, who in the Language of the Holy Scripture, *make their Belly their God, and their Gold their Confidence, or who sacrifice*



*their own Net, and burn Incense to their Drag?* by ascribing their Acquisitions of Wealth and Honour to their own Wit and Sagacity, which is primarily owing to the Direction of his Providence, and cannot be obtained without his Permission. For what less is this in the true Construction of it, than the setting up False Gods in their Hearts, to the manifest Injury, if not to the Exclusion, of the only True one? For, if to Love, and Fear, and Trust, be Acts of Inward Devotion, (especially when raised above the Pitch of Created Excellence;) then he that so loves, and fears, and trusts, turns the Monarchy of Heaven, as it were, into a Commonwealth, and forms to himself as many Gods, as there are Persons, or Things, he sets his Heart upon, and devotes his Affections to. A  
Degree

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Degree of Idolatry and Impiety that ought not to be thought of (much less practised) among Christians, without the greatest Abhorrence. I pray God it may never be laid to the Charge of any who call themselves by that Name.

S E C T. II.

*On His Truth and Justice.*

I come now to the Duties that result from the Consideration of his other Attributes that are styl'd *Communicable*, which, in the usual Method of treating them, are *Faith, Love, Fear, and Obedience*, as they seem more immediately to relate to the *Truth and Justice*, the *Goodness and Holiness*, the *Wisdom and Power* of God. But without confining myself precisely

cifely to this Method, I fhall briefly run over thefe Attributes in their Order, and draw fuch Inferences from them, as moft naturally arife from a due Reflection upon each.

And, firft, If God be a *God of Truth*, then there is all the Reason in the World, that we fhould believe and affent to whatever he has been pleafed to reveal to us in his Divine Word, the Holy Scriptures; which, however difficult for us to comprehend in fome Points, that are above the Reach of our Reason to come up to; yet as they are delivered to us under that Denomination, and have his Divine Sanction fet to them; we are indifpenfibly obliged, upon that infinitely Superior Standard of all Truth, to give a firm Affent to it at the Peril of our future State.

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And if this be the Case, as undoubtedly it is, how nearly does it concern those Infidels (who, by refusing this Assent, exclude themselves from the Terms of that gracious Covenant God has therein entered into with Mankind) seriously and impartially to consider what a dangerous and dismal Condition they must be in? What little Room there is for Mercy, or Hopes of Salvation by Him at that great Day of Trial, which is to be *the Time of Justice*, and be persuaded to *repent and return to a better Mind*? 'Tis too dangerous an Experiment for any wise and serious Man to hazard his Eternity upon; and the greatest Madness therefore for a professed Christian, who has so many various and infallible Evidences for the Truth and Authority of that Divine

vine



vine Revelation, *to be led astray* by the Groundless and Presumptive Errors of *their Ways*, *to fall from the Stedfastness* of his own Faith in it.

But what is yet further to be inferred from this Attribute is, that, if God be True and infallible in performing *his Promises*, here is a firm Foundation laid for our *Hope and Affiance* in Him, even under the seeming Improbability of the Accomplishment of them. We may safely and surely trust Him with our highest Concernments, whether Spiritual or Temporal, and ought therefore not to be dejected, or disquieted, tho' He sometimes withdraws his Blessings from us for a Season, and defers the Returns of the e thi

proper and convenient for us; because, as the Apostle tells us, *He is faithfull that has promised.* Heb. x. 23.----On the contrary, how much rather does it become us in all Complaints of that Kind impartially to reflect on our own Ill Conduct and Criminal Behaviour towards Him, as the true Occasion of it, and take Care, without Delay, to return to our Duty, by correcting and reforming whatever, upon due Examination, we find to be amiss therein? *lest a Promise being left us of entering into his Rest, any one should fall short of it thro' his own Fault, or Neglect.* Heb. iv. 1.

The only Way to be easy, and to free ourselves from any Fears and Apprehensions of that Sort, is to make the Truth of God the Original Pattern for us to copy after; and  
by

by conforming our Minds to His Divine Image in that Respect, to use our utmost Vigilance and Endeavours to be true and faithfull, not only in the Performance of all our solemn Oaths and Vows made in God's Name, (the Breach of which is one of the most provoking Affronts we can put upon his Divine Being) but also towards Men, by a strict Observance of our Words and Promises in all our Dealings and Transactions with them.

Lying and Falshood is of so base and detestable a Nature, in the common Sense of Mankind, that those of superior Rank, who pique themselves upon their Honour, cannot bear the Reproach of it without the greatest Indignation, and too often carry the Resentment to their Swords; and f

are even in the lower Sphere of Life, that will brook the Name of Liars without some signal Marks of Rancour and Revenge.

And if this Vice be so extremely odious and provoking to our Fellow-Creatures, how much more abominable must it be to God, who is Truth itself, and who, in all Parts of His Divine Word, has not only expressly prohibited it, but denounced the heaviest Judgments and Punishments against it by his Prophets under the Law, as well as the Apostles of Christ under the Gospel, to deter Men from it? Thus the Royal Prophet we find very emphatically declares, that, *He hates the Sins of Unfaithfulness*, and that *he who telleth Lies shall not tarry in his Sight*. Ps. xx. 7. And Solomon expressly assures us, Prov. xii. 22. *That Lying Lips are an*



*an Abomination to the Lord, but they that deal truly are his Delight.* And the Heathen Moralists in general represent it as a Vice equally odious both to God and Man.

How nearly then does it concern us, as Christians, who profess to believe and worship the God of Truth, to make it a Point of Conscience, as far as possible, to speak it Ourselves; to use Plainness and Sincerity in our Expressions, and abhor Falshood and Dissimulation, though couch'd under the *Jesuitical* *resin'd* Disguise of Equivocation, and Reserve. From all which it may be truly infer'd, that those who allow themselves in those delusive Evasions, whatever Badge of Religion they may wear, can no more pretend to vindicate the Lawfulness of them, than they can reconcile the Contrariety there is be-

tween the God of Truth, and the Father of Lyes, the Devil.

But farther yet, as God is *True* and Faithfull, so is he *Just* and Equitable in all His Dispensations, which, however hidden and unintelligible they may be to us, do justly call for our Faith and Hope in, as well as our Fear and Reverence of Him.----The Inferences from which are briefly these; That we ought not to murmur or repine under His *Inflictions*, of what Kind soever they be; to despair of His *Mercy*, if we truly repent us of our Sins, or be puffed up with a vain Confidence in it, if we do not; because, *as He is righteous in all that He brings upon us here; so will He likewise be in the Distribution of His Rewards and Punishments hereafter.* Let the Prospect

spect therefore of his gracious Promises engage us in the Observation of His Precepts, and the Dread of His Judgments deter us from persisting in the Violation of them.

### S E C T. III.

#### *On His Holiness and Goodness.*

If *Holiness* be another Property of the Divine Nature (as indeed it is usually styl'd the *brightest* Ray of it) what a settled Aversion should this create in us against the bold Encroachments and Assaults of Impiety and Licentiousness, which bears an eternal Repugnance to it? How highly do we offend and affront the Almighty whenever we indulge ourselves in any habitual Course of Sin, and how earnestly ought we to guard and strive



strive against it *by purifying ourselves,*  
 (as far as 'tis in our Power) *from all*  
*Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit,*  
*perfecting Holiness in the Fear of*  
*God?* Being well assured, that with-  
 out this 'tis impossible to please Him,  
 or be received into his Favour, till  
 we reform our Course of Life, and  
 become *New Creatures.*

What a dreadful Condemnation  
 then must those Monsters of Impiety  
 bring upon themselves, who are ar-  
 rived to that Height of Audacious-  
 ness and Profaneness, as to make  
 their *Shame their Glory*, to account  
 it a Piece of Gallantry and Accom-  
 plishment to promote and excell in  
 Vices and Iniquities of all Kinds ;---  
 by inventing New Arts of Frauds  
 and Villainy, Robbery and Extor-  
 tion, and even that of deliberate  
 Murder and Paricide itself.

Crimes

. Crimes of so Deep and Malignant a Dye, as were, in former Ages, thought altogether incompatible with the Institution of a Christian State, and chargeable only on those wild and barbarous Nations, that are said to be *without Hope, and without God in the World*;---But are now become so rife and redundant amongst us, that scarce a Day, or Night passes without some grievous Out-cries in our High-Ways and Streets of that Sort: notwithstanding the Severity of fresh Laws enacted, and the Impartiality of our Courts of Judicature to put them in Execution.

'Tis no small Comfort to us, however, that, in the Midst of so many desperate Libertines and Reprobates of every Sort, we have still, 'tis to be hoped, a much superior Number of true Christians remaining, (whose

true Piety and Virtue have hitherto entitled us to the Favour and Protection of the Almighty) to check and curb their audacious Progress, and make them feel the Smart of the Rod of Justice, by suitable Punishments inflicted on their Crimes; and (if not reformed by these) to *cut them off from the Land of the Living, as they too justly deserve.*

The present Age (as licentious as it is) is not yet, God be thanked, quite so bad, as to break in upon the Natural Distinctions of Good and Evil, or to change the essential Properties of them. There is a native Beauty and Amiableness in true Piety and Virtue, which, under all the invidious Rancour and Prejudice it has to struggle with, commands the Reverence and Esteem of all Wise and Serious Men, and for the  
most

most Part even of the profligate Sinner himself; who would very gladly be thought Good, tho' in Fact he is quite the contrary.

And if the inferior Degree of Goodness among Men is so much revered and respected, how plainly and forcibly are we obliged to pay the utmost Regard possible to the Holiness of God Himself? And that not only by striving earnestly to copy after it in the general Conduct of our Lives: but likewise by shewing a due Reverence to all such sacred *Places, Persons, and Things*, as, by a relative Sort of Holiness, are more immediately dedicated and set a-part to his Honour and Service; according to those stated Rules and Orders, which from the first Ages of Christianity, have been appointed to be observ'd in his Church,



And this brings me to the Consideration of the Duties arising from the other Branch of His Holiness, which is called *Goodness*, as he is not only absolutely Good in Himself, but also with Respect to us. In that He is the Author and Fountain of our Being, and of all the Blessings and Comforts that attend it; who freely gives us all that we enjoy, and is willing upon the easy Terms of Repentance, to forgive us all that we offend in. The bare Mention of which is so very endearing and engaging, that it cannot but excite us to the utmost Expressions of Affection and Gratitude, we are capable of paying to Him; there being no Kind of Motive to Love, either real or imaginary, but what is yet infinitely more in God than in any Thing else in the World beside.

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If he were represented to us as an Austere and Rigorous Deity, easily provoked, and hard to be appeased, there might be some Plea for our Coldness or Indifference in this Respect: But when we are convinced of our infinite Obligations to him, and our Misery without him; that all our Temporal as well as Spiritual Blessings (as has been before set forth) are derived from Him, and that our utmost Felicity consists in the Enjoyment of him; how stupidly ungrateful shall we be to so gracious a Benefactor, how highly injurious to Ourselves, if we make not those Returns that are due to so transcendent a Goodness?

The Return of Love for Love, is one of those general Laws of Nature, which God, the great Author of it, has impress'd upon all Living Crea-

tures, which, however void of Thought and Reflection, are moved and inclined, by an Instinctive Sort of Gratitude, to love and lick the Hand that feeds and sustains them. And if mere Animals are so universally moved to do this, how much stronger must that Impression be upon the Rational Part of the Creation, who are, or ought to be, much more sensibly affected with it?----And by what Criterion are we to judge of this Matter, unless it be by the usual Tokens and Effects of the Love we bear to one another, which are distinguished by such Circumstances, as, if (rightly observed and applied,) would for the most Part point out the Sincerity of it; and what those are, need but just be hinted at to make the Application here intended.

“ 'Tis

“ 'Tis natural for every Man, who  
“ truly and sincerely loves his  
“ Friend, to desire and delight to  
“ see and converse with him as oft  
“ as possibly he can ; to open his  
“ Heart to him with Freedom and  
“ Familiarity, and to avoid Saying  
“ or Doing any Thing which he  
“ knows will be displeasing, or in  
“ any Respect injurious or provoking  
“ to him. And could our Love to  
“ God be brought to bear that Test  
“ in any Measure or Degree it can  
“ be supposed capable of being ad-  
“ vanced to, how happy should we  
“ be in the Consequences that re-  
“ sult from it, how earnest and  
“ solicitous to reduce it to Practice  
“ in the several Duties and Obli-  
“ gations we are call'd upon to pa-  
“ to him.”



There is no Doubt a great Difference and Distinction to be made in this Case, on Account of the Transcendent Sublimity of the Divine Being, and the Infinite Distance there is between God and Man, with regard to our present State and Condition in this lower World. But some Equivalents there are of a Spiritual Nature, which, if devoutly made use of, and duly applied, would effectually answer the End proposed by it.---For Instance; *We cannot see God's Face, or hear his Voice*; but we have the Glorious Privilege of being admitted to His Temple and His Altar, where he has promised his more *Immediate Presence* with us, as oft as we assemble together in His Name; as also to hear his sacred Word read and preached, in which he has *spoken* and declared His Will and Pleasure  
to

to Mankind, and still continues to do so by a standing Ministry He has appointed in His Church for that Purpose.

Again; *We cannot, indeed, enter into any Freedom or Familiarity of Conversation with God, as we do with one another:* But we are at full Liberty, (as it is our Duty) to open our Hearts to Him, by confessing and bewailing the several Transgressions we are guilty of; to set before Him our Wants and Grievances of every Kind we at any Time lie under; and consequently to implore His Pardon and Forgiveness for the Former, together with the Blessings of his bountiful Goodness and Mercy to assist, and relieve us under the Latter, as far as He in His infinite Wisdom sees meet

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and proper for us. All which, as it implies a Spiritual Converſe and Communion with Him ; ſo, if it be done in a proper Manner, by ſuch ſpecial Exerciſes of Piety and Devotion, as have been already pointed out under a former Head ; we may aſſuredly depend upon His gracious Acceptance of them here, as the beſt and only Means in our Power to prepare us for a Happy Admiſſion to His Glorious Preſence in Heaven, where *we ſhall ſee Him as He is*, and live for ever with Him.

### S E C T. IV.

#### *On His Knowledge and Wiſdom.*

If God be a Being of Infinite Knowledge and Wiſdom, as has been ſhewn, this ought to create in

us



us an awful Apprehension of His Presence ; and by Consequence, of His Privy to all that we act or think. The firm Belief of which will have a double Influence upon us, by encouraging us to do our Duty as well as restraining us from the Wilful Transgression of it; the one upon the Prospect of Reward, the other for Fear of Punishment. For did Men really consider, that God sees in Secret, that his Eye pervades the Darkness, and lays all Things Naked and Open before it; that our private, as well as publick Actions, are fully discovered by Him ; with what Face could they allow themselves in the Practice of Lying and Perjury, Theft and Adultery, which even the Knowledge and Presence of Men either wholly deters them from, or makes them ashamed of?

And if Fear and Shame from Men have such an Influence upon us, What a Terror must it needs strike us with to reflect, that, as oft as we are guilty of the like Vices, we are not only exposed to the View, but even to the Vengeance of Him, who is both our Creator and our Judge. For the better avoiding of which, that remarkable Sentence of *Seneca* to a daring Sinner of this Sort, may be very properly apply'd: “ *Wouldst thou sin securely, says he, then find out a Place where God cannot see thee; but that thou art assured is impossible, therefore why dost thou attempt it?*”

And this brings me in the next Place to shew the Folly of Hypocrisy and Diffimulation, and what a Vanity it is to make a Shew of that Outwardly, which Inwardly, and in  
our

our Hearts we are not; to put on a Mask of Religion, and appear beautiful without, when *inwardly we are full of Corruption and Uncleanness*. He that does this, does not only dishonour God, by reverencing Men above Him, but does in Effect, by a secret Sort of Atheism, disbelieve his Being. For (as a pious Author expresses it) *a Man may as well deny there is a Sun, as deny its essential Property to shine and enlighten the World.*

How greatly then does it behove us to consider duly the Perfection of the Divine Understanding, compared with the Blindness and Ignorance of our Own; and learn first to be humble, and then to be good; to admire and adore *the Father of Lights*, and pray for His Grace to enable us to vanquish *the Prince of Darkness*, by an assiduous Endeavour to *cast off*  
the

*the Works* He tempts us to? Let us therefore, suppose ourselves always under God's Inspection, and live and act as if we were so. Let us not flatter ourselves with the little Arts of Disguise and Concealment, and whilst we hide our Iniquities in our own Bosoms, think it sufficient *to justify ourselves before Men*: But by an open Confession of, and Resolution against them, let us charge ourselves with inward Purity and Holiness, and make it our chief Study *to approve our Hearts before Him*, Who will one Day judge us according to them.

But farther, as God is infinitely *Knowing*, so is He likewise infinitely *Wise* in the Administration and Government of the World. What

a Pride and Folly then is it for Man, either to measure his Hopes and Happiness by the notional Depth of his own Policy and Projects, or to dispute the Reasonableness of God's Providence, when he meets with Disappointments from it? He that affects to be wise in these Respects, does, in Effect proclaim himself a Fool; debases the Wisdom of the Almighty, and destroys the Reputation of his own, by the same Way he absurdly proposes to raise it. For as God is the true Author and Fountain of all that is Great, and Good, and Happy; so Nothing else deserves the Name of Wisdom, but what leads us to a Dependance on that of God; and those Councils are only safe, that are formed upon an entire Submission to his Will, *in whom* (as the Apostle says) *are hid all the Treasures*



*Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge,*  
and from whom alone we must expect to receive them.

Let us, therefore, look up to God for this Divine Gift, and as far as it is communicable, endeavour to partake of the Benefits of it, by making Him the Object of our Faith and Love, and His Laws the Rule of our Life and Conversation. And since *the Race is not always to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong;* since the best laid Designs of Men may, by the over-ruling Hand of Providence, be crushed to Nothing, and the fairest Hopes defeated, let us not put our Confidence in the Arm of Flesh, or the Strength of our own Understanding, but commit Ourselves, and our Concerns to him, who knows us better than we do ourselves, and disposes all Things  
for

for the best to those that put their Trust in Him. In a Word, *Let us cast our principal Care upon Him, who careth for us*, and leave it to God, who made the World to govern and sustain it.

S E C T. V.

*On His Power and Dominion.*

The last of the Divine Attributes I mentioned, is *Power* and *Dominion*, which, as it ought always to be attended with *Fear* and *Reverence*; so it naturally obliges us to *Subjection* and *Obedience*: The former of which respects His Commands, the latter His Judgments and Punishments.

As to the first, it will be necessary for me, in order to do Justice



to it, previously to observe, that the *Fear of God* being in general but another Name for Religion (as taking in the whole Compass of the several Duties comprised in, and required by it) is here to be understood only of that particular Passion and Affection of the Mind, which is usually distinguished under the Names of *Filial* and *Servile* Fear. And that God, as the great Creator and Governor of the World, has a just Title to be feared and revered by His Creatures in both these Respects, is a Truth so universally agreeable to the Dictates of Human Reason, as well as the Authority of Divine Revelation, that it would be needless to trouble the Reader with Quotations to that Purpose.

The very Nature of *Filial Fear* (which implies a Mixture of Divine  
Love

Love included in it) bespeaks our Obligation to the pious Exercise of it, as primarily due to the Almighty Lord and Father of Mankind; and that not only in our Natural Capacity, as Men, but in a Spiritual one also, as Children adopted, redeemed, and sanctified by Him to His Honour and Service.-----Nor does this near Relation we thus bear to Him, in any Degree exempt us from that other Branch of *Fear* that is more properly call'd *Dread*; which, tho' it seems to be more Mercenary and dissingenuous than the former, is yet no less necessary in our present Frail State to check and restrain the Enormity of our sinful Appetites and Affections from getting the Ascendant over us, and to keep us steady to those Divine Rules and Precepts

God has prescribed us to square our Actions by.

We are therefore very pathetically exhorted and required by the Apostle St. *Paul*, *Phil.* ii. 13. *To work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*; and that for this weighty Reason, because *'tis God that worketh in us to will and to do after his own good Pleasure.*—For the better Understanding of which it will be proper to subjoin this short Remark, that the *Fear and Trembling* here meant is not supposed to arise from the servile Dread of future Punishments (which the upright Christian may be presumed to be entirely free from) but from that which he is more sensibly affected with, the Fear of *doing Despight to the Spirit of Grace*, in neglecting his Divine Impulses and Impressions upon his

his Heart by the Transgression of those sacred Rules of Faith and Obedience, which the Gospel of Christ enjoins: He is therefore called our *Fellow Labourer* in this great Work of our Salvation; who inspires us not only with the Ability, but the Will and Inclination to fulfil the Conditions of it. Without which (as I have before proved) we are able to do nothing in such a Manner, as will entitle us to God's Acceptance.

How far the best of Men have, and do fall short of this in some Respects, every true Christian must be left to judge for himself: But it must with Grief, I fear be acknowledged, that the moving Expostulations God was pleased to make with his own People the Jews---[*If I be a Father where is my Honour; if I be a Master, where is my Fear*] is but too

justly applicable to the Generality of Christians on this Account.-----How nearly then does it concern us all to reflect impartially on the Ingratitude and Danger of any frequent or careless Neglect of so important a Duty? And make it our chief Care (as the Prophet *David* directs) *to serve the Lord with Fear, and rejoice unto Him with Reverence.* And then we may have the Comfort of making the same Inference He did, that as *God is not extreme to mark what is done amiss, so there is Mercy with Him, therefore shall he be feared.*

But now, if the Righteous, or those that appear to be so, in this View of the Case, are in so hazardous a State, what can we say, or think of that Infidel Set of Libertines (who professedly disclaim all religious Obligations to it, but that they are unhappily

happily *given over to a Reprobate Mind*, and act in open Defiance of the dreadful Judgments, He has threatened to the wilful Neglect and Violation of it?

The false and pretended Pleas, they presume to offer, in Vindication of these Destructive Principles they profess, are, First, That they may avoid the Imputation of *Credulity* on the one Hand, by taking Things upon Trust, as their Forefathers had done, and of *Cowardice*, for fear of future Punishment on the other, which they cannot bear the imaginary Reproach of on any Account.---And yet it is manifestly true in Fact, from the Absurdity of the novel Tenets they are drawn in to believe, as well as the irksome Apprehensions, which are the natural Result of them; “ That  
there

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there are None more justly chargeable with the Folly and Guilt of Both, than this Sect of Free-Thinkers are; In that they do not only presumptuously form to themselves a Rule of Faith, without any Foundation at all for it; But are remarkably terrified at the Surprize of any extraordinary, or uncommon Events in the Spheres above, or in the earthly Regions here below; and tremble at the very Thoughts of the near Approach of Death; as being but too sensible, that instead of putting an End to their Fears, it will only serve to convince them, too late, of the real Grounds they had, or ought to have had, for them.

Which brings me of Course to the other Branch of Duty arising from  
this



this Attribute, *viz. Subjection and Obedience to His Laws.*—And here the first Thing required of us is, that we should not only consent to the *Laws of God, that they are Good*, by acknowledging the Fitness and Propriety of them to advance the Happiness and Perfection of our Nature; but pay a ready and submissive Obedience to the several Precepts, Institutions, and Judgments therein enacted; and be so far from looking upon them as a *Yoke or a Burthen*, as to make them our chief Study and Delight, and esteem the Discharge of our *Service* therein, to be indeed a *Perfect Freedom*.

But as we are all of us, God knows, too apt to fall under his Displeasure, by the frequent Breach or Neglect of these Duties; it is farther required, that, in case of our

Disobedience to him, we should patiently submit to his Divine Sanctions, and take in good Part any Penalties or Punishments He thinks fit to inflict upon us for it.---And what can be more rational and equitable than this? We cannot but all own, that as we are born in a State of Dependence on God, and owe all that we have, or expect to have, to Him? So he may justly deprive us of any Blessing we enjoy or bring any Evil of Punishment upon us, which he finds we deserve. and what Occasion then have we to repine at His thus dealing with us, when the Evils we suffer here are for the most Part as much short of our Transgressions, as the Good Things we enjoy, are above, and beyond our Deserts?

Obedience, in the general Sense of the Word, is Nothing more than  
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what is owing to such Persons, as in any Superior Relation to us have a Right to command. For the Apostle St. Peter tells us, 1 Ep. ii. 13. *That we ought to submit ourselves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's Sake, whether it be to the King as supreme, Or unto Governors, as unto them that are set over us by him; and that not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience Sake.* And if we are to pay so much Honour and Homage to the our Earthly Princes and Magistrates, how much more highly are we obliged to pay Obedience to his Statutes and Judgments, *by whom Kings reign, and Princes decree Justice,* and who, as the Divine St. John describes him, Rev. xix. 16. *has on His Vesture, and on his Thigh a Name, written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords?*

Let us reflect then with an awful Reverence on the Excellency and Perfection of these sacred Laws, as well with Regard to the sovereign Authority of the Divine Legislator, from whom they are derived, as the exceeding Weight of Glory, or Misery that attends the Keeping or Violating of them. Let us give them a distinguished Preference to all other Laws we are here subject to, and sincerely endeavour, by a Conscientious Discharge of all the Duties therein required, to demonstrate our just Sense of the Passive Obedience and Subjection that is absolutely due to Him, and the Firmness of our Faith and Affiance in His Holy Word, to make good the Rewards He has promised to the former, and the Punishments he has threaten'd to the latter on the said Conditions.

This,


This, if we do in Sincerity and Truth, we shall not only promote our own Peace and Comfort, and alleviate the Afflictions He is here pleased to bring upon us ; but, by the Light and Lustre of *our good Works, set forth the Praises of Him who has called us to such a High and Heavenly Vocation in Christ Jesus,* and fulfil that important Precept of *St. Paul, of doing all Things to the Glory of God.*





A  
SUBSEQUENT DISCOURSE  
ON  
DIVINE WISDOM,  
AND THE

Many happy Fruits and Effects of it  
both in this World and the Next.

AVING before finished,  
in the plainest and most  
useful Manner I could,  
the Practical Inferences from, and  
Remarks on the several Attributes  
before treated of, with Regard to  
the Duties arising from them, as  
well

well as the Errors and Vices to which they stand opposed; I think it further incumbent on me, in order to excite my Readers to the Conscientious Discharge of the foregoing Duties, to offer some more persuasive and self-interesting Motives and Arguments, in this Dissertation upon the Absolute Necessity and Importance of Divine Wisdom-----As it highly conduces far above any other, “not only to advance the Dignity of our Rational Faculties, by restoring them to the Perfection in which they were created; but also to promote and secure our temporal, as well as our spiritual Happiness, both in this World and the next.”

But before I proceed to the Proof of these Particulars, it will not be improper to observe, by Way of Introduction, That, as Man  
is



is an Active and Inquisitive Creature, whose Thoughts are perpetually in Motion to improve his Rational Faculties in the Search of *Truth*; and whose Desires are ever stretching at somewhat above, or beyond his Reach in Pursuit of *Happiness*, either real or suppos'd; so whatever tends most to the Enlarging the One, and the Completion and Satisfaction of the Other, must be the best and most proper Object to employ his Thoughts upon; and that, no Doubt is the Knowledge of God, in the Religion instituted by Him to that End.

A Competent Skill and Knowledge in the Circle of Arts and Sciences, and the New Discoveries and Improvements which have from Age to Age been made in the several Branches of them, is doubtless a very noble and useful Employment

ment for our Rational Faculties to be exercised in,-----As is that likewise of the Historical and Political States, as well as Languages of the several Nations around us in the World, which we have any Sort of Commerce or Correspondence with : But how far short all these are of the Divine Knowledge of God and His Laws, is a Point so self-evident, that it admits of no Dispute.

It is recorded of King *Solomon* (who justly bears the Character of the wisest Man, which any Age has ever produced) that when God was pleas'd to make an Offer of giving him any Thing whatsoever he should ask or desire, he made Choice of Divine Wisdom, as the most desirable Blessing that could be bestow'd upon him. All the Honours, Riches, and Enjoyments of every Kind, which this

World could afford or his Heart could wish for, were in his Esteem, we find, so far from being grateful and satisfactory to him, that upon a full Survey and Experienc of them, he pronounced them all to be but *Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*. And what else has the common Experience of every Age been since, but One continued Proof and Confirmation of that Truth?

## S E C T. I.

This being premised concerning the Essential Worth and Excellence of Divine Knowledge in general, I now proceed to the Consideration of the two distinct Branches before-mentioned, into which it is divided, and to give you a transient View of  
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the several Motives and Arguments that are usually urged on each Head, to convince you of the Evidence of it.

1. *The first of which is, that this Divine Knowledge does, above all others, highly conduce to advance the Dignity of our Rational Nature, by restoring it to the Perfection in which it was created.*

And this, as 'tis purely speculative, implies the Impartment of such a Degree of it, as discovers to us, not only the Nature and Attributes, but the Perfections and Operations of the Divine Being, in the several Manifestations He has made of Himself, in his Works of Creation, Providence, and Redemption.----Next it informs us concerning Ourselves, what our Frame and Original is; for

what End we were made; wherein our Felicity truly consists, and how that Felicity is to be attained.---It teaches us from what Principles, by what Measures, and upon what Grounds we should act; discovers to us the Nature of Faith and Infidelity, Truth and Falsehood, Virtue and Vice; and at the' same Time proposes such powerful Inducements to the One, and Discouragements from the Other, as Nothing but downright Folly and Obstinacy can possibly withstand:-----In short, it inspires us with the Contemplation of the most glorious and important Truths, recommended to us in the noblest and most refined System of Moral Precepts that can possibly be conceived;-----and the more effectually to engage us in the Belief of the former, and the Practice of the latter,

latter, it fills us with the Hopes of the most ravishing Joys and Delights on the one Hand, and the Fears and Apprehensions of the most Exquisite Miseries on the other, that Human Nature is capable of forming any Idea of.

But what makes this Wisdom and Knowledge yet more valuable is, that it is not grounded on the Natural Deductions of Reason only, or the conjectural Opinions and Traditions of Men; but upon the infallible Authority of God Himself, conveyed to us by plain and positive Testimonies, sufficient with equal Influence and Evidence, to enlighten the Simple, as well as to convince the Wise. For even the Ignorant and Illiterate (as has been before shewn) are capable of attaining to this Wisdom, if they seek it at the  
Source

Source from whence it springs, the sacred Oracles of the Divine Word, and attend to the Dictates of the Blessed Spirit, whose proper Office it is to illuminate and direct them in such a Search.

Nor does this Knowledge only conduce to refine and enlighten our Rational Faculties, by clearing them from Error, Ignorance, and Doubt ; but by representing to our Minds the Beauty and Purity of Christian Truth and Virtue, it frees the Heart from vicious Habits, and stubborn Inclinations, and disposes the whole Man to an universal Obedience and Conformity to the Will and Word of God. All which is comprized in that noted Testimony of St. *Peter* in his second Epistle, c. i. v. 6, 7, where he tells us, that *it adds to our Faith Virtue, to Virtue Godliness,*

to



*to Godliness Brotherly Kindness, and to Brotherly Kindness Charity. And then subjoins this Assurance, that if these Things be in us, and abound, we shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the several good Works that flow from them.*

The first and principal Faculty of our Souls is the *Understanding*, whose only Aim - and Delight is *Truth*; and *what is Truth*, or where is it to be found, but in the Contemplation of *God*, and his Divine *Laws*? The Deductions of Reason from the Natural Observation of Things, (as every Day's Experience teaches us) is often fallible, always imperfect. Our very *Senses*, which are the Inlets of this Experience, by which the Ideas of Things are conveyed to the Mind, are apt to delude us with false Appearances, even in the Natural C

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quences of Causes and Effects. How dark and confused then must our Ideas be of Things supernatural ; of the spiritual Acts of Faith and Piety ; of the Happiness of Heaven, and the Way that leads us to it, without the Influence of the *Wisdom that comes from above*, which is alone sufficient to direct us therein ?

As it is therefore of the greatest Importance imaginable, to have the Understanding rightly informed by this Divine Light ; so it cannot but raise a Pleasure in the Will, and Conformity in the Affections, to execute and put in Practice what that proposes. For to what else should a Man's Will incline him, but to the Prosecution of that which he knows to be his Happiness, as well as his Duty ? And what can more effectually engage his Affections,  
than

than that, which alone can *fill up the Measure* of them?

The Pleasures of Flesh and Sense are so contradictory to the Principles of that spiritual Wisdom God has impressed on our Minds, that they cannot but make Life very uneasy and uncomfortable. Whereas the Duties of Religion, which are in all Respects conformable to these Principles, strike a perpetual Harmony upon the Soul, compose the Thoughts, and calm the Affections, and diffuse such a sweet Complacency through *all* the Powers of it, that the very Argument of *Pleasure*, which is generally the greatest Prejudice against the Exercise of this Wisdom, does, when rightly stated, prove the best Motive to induce us to it.

It must, no Doubt, be owned, that so long as the Soul is confined

to the Body, there will be some Strugglings of the *Flesh* against the *Spirit*; and these two Principles being opposite in their Nature, cannot as (St. *Paul* himself experienced) but raise frequent Jars and Contentions within us, which require some Care and Pains to overcome. But as the chief Difficulty is only in the first Onset, at our first Entrance upon a religious Course of Life; so 'tis made every Day more easy and agreeable by the Influence of Divine Grace, and the Assurance of Success, if we earnestly strive and contend for it. And who would decline or start back from such an Engagement, which he's assured is to end in so triumphant a Victory? A Victory, attended with more true Pleasure and Satisfaction than all the Voluptuaries of this World can in Reality

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Reality propose to themselves, from the profusest and most Exquisite of Sensual Enjoyments.

S E C T. II.

Having thus far set before you the many Happy and Glorious Effects of this Divine Wisdom and Knowledge, in Respect of its Agreeableness to our Natural Faculties, The next Thing to be considered is,

2dly, *The Moral and Rational Tendency it has to promote and secure our Temporal, as well as our Spiritual Happiness, in this Life and the next.*

And here, if the inspired Advice and Opinion of King *Solomon*, and

that too founded on his own Experience, have any Weight with us, (as it ought to have the greatest) we find him so full and emphatical in his Declarations with Regard to the following Particulars, that I cannot better open my Way to them, than in the Words of that Noble Character he gives us of this Wisdom. *She is more precious, says he, than Rubies, and all the Things thou can'st desire are not to be compared unto her. Her Merchandize is better than the Merchandize of Silver, and the Gain thereof than fine Gold; Length of Days are in her Right-Hand, and in her Left-Hand Riches and Honour. Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace.* Prov. iii. 13, 14, &c.

To

To illustrate and evince the Truth of which Assertions, and set these Temporal Blessings in the clearest Light I can-----The first I think proper to mention, as the most general and comprehensive of the Rest, are *Health* and *Prosperity*. With Regard to the former, I need only appeal to the common Experience of Mankind to determine, whether the Moderation, or Excess of our Passions and Pleasures be most conducive to the Health of the Body? The Fatigues the Miser feels in his too eager Pursuit of Wealth; the Frettings and Vexations of the Envious and Uncharitable; the Oppressive Surfeits of the Luxurious and Intemperate, and the too common Weakness and Rottenness of Constitution, which the Debauchee entails upon himself and his Posterity,---cannot but in-



duce them all (if they would freely speak their Thoughts) to own and lament this self-evident Truth——

“ That there are Multitudes more that cut short their own Lives by the Transports of Passion, Sensuality, and Intemperance, who waste and consume their Strength, by offering Violence to Nature, than of those who suffer Nature to finish its Course by gentle, and regular, and gradual Decays.

The natural Consequence of all which is, that as every vicious lewd Man, is, in Effect, if not a *Felo de se*, yet (what is next a-kin to it) the worst and greatest Enemy to himself in the World; so it is the Virtuous Man only, who curbs and restrains the Impetuosity of his Passions and Lusts, and lives within the Bounds of Morality and Religion, that truly  
consults

consults his Health, that preserves and improves his Sprightliness and Vigour, and answers the proper Ends of his natural, as well as his spiritual Life.

Nor is Religion less conducive to our Temporal *Prosperity*, than it is to our Natural and Bodily Health. For from whence springs the Affluence of Wealth and Prosperity, but from the over-ruling Order and Dispensations of Divine Providence: Is not God the Giver of *every good Gift*? Is not every Thing we enjoy the Effect of his Bounty? And who has so just a Title to his Favour, as he that endeavours to obey his Will, and to worship and serve him as he has appointed?

But not to insist upon this Argument (which the Prosperity of the Wicked, in their corrupt Way of Thinking,

Thinking, is apt to make less popular and persuasive than it ought to be) if we consider but the Moral Tendency of Religion in this Matter, we shall find in Effect the whole Circle of Virtues mutually conspiring to advance and make up the Righteous Man's Fortune; and must consequently be obliged to acknowledge and allow, that as all Vice in general, is destructive of our Happiness, so all the Virtues in particular, in one Respect or other, are the surest Means to conduce to the Attainment and Completion of it, as may be made appear from the following Particulars, of which,

The first I shall mention are those of *Temperance* and *Chastity*, which, whatever a Man's present Circumstances may be, reduce his Wants  
into

into so narrow a Compass, that tho' he have never so little, these Virtues enable him, not only to live comfortably and contentedly upon it, but sometimes to increase and improve it to such a Height, as to draw upon him the Censure of some of his Invidious Neighbours, to call in Question the Probity and Justice of his Dealings, and reproach him as much for his present Affluence, as before they despised him for his Poverty and Necessity.

With Regard, indeed, to the Virtues of *Justice* and *Integrity*, it must be owned, they will not suffer the true Christian to run those Lengths that other Men do, but restrain him from saying and doing many Things, which your wordly-wise never stick at to bring about their Designs. But

even these Restraints, generally speaking, are rather subservient to his Wealth and Advancement, than Hindrances of his Progress in the Way to it. For, though he keeps strictly to the Paths of God's Commandments, (which are, and ought to be, the Boundaries of his Pursuits) yet, it cannot but be acknowledged,---That, what is observed of the Traveller, who confines himself to the Fences of his Road, without deviating into By-Paths of his own chusing, is properly applicable to the Case now before us, viz. "That he always comes surer, and sometimes sooner to his Journey's End, than He that leaps over all Inclosures, to follow a more licentious and extravagant Aim.

And the Reason of this is so very obvious, that it speaks for itself.

For

For does not all Trust and Confidence in Trade, or Business, depend upon the Credit and Integrity of the Person engaged in it? Is not every Man averse to be cheated or deceived, wronged, or outwitted? And don't we always suspect and avoid that Person whom we know to be false crafty, and designing? This is what the fraudulent Dealer Himself is so sensible of, that as he readily allows *Honesty to be the best Policy*, so he pretends not to cheat, but under the Mask and Covert of it. And if the bare Pretence of Honesty and Justice be so necessary an Expedient to thrive in the World, how much more must the Sincerity of it conduce to this End?

Tricking and Injustice may for a while lie hid under such Disguises, and so long as it does so, it may no



Doubt be serviceable to answer that Purpose. But whenever it is discovered, as sooner or later it is sure to be, (for *a Lying Tongue, says Solomon, is but for a Moment, and he that perverteth his Ways shall be known*) the natural Effect and Consequence of which is, that it exposes the Delinquent to Censure, and Reproach, and puts others upon their Guard to beware of, and avoid him. So that by catching unlawfully at a little present Profit on this or that Occasion, he loses all the future Advantages he might have reaped by honest Methods, and does in effect disable and incapacitate himself for carrying on his Projects and Designs with Success.

But supposing on the other Hand, that he should be so Artful in his Disguises, as to escape the Discovery and Censure of the World; or so  
fortunate

fortunate, as to grow rich and great under the worst of Characters ; yet, as all his Actions are *naked and open to the Eyes of God*, who hates and punishes Iniquity to future Generations ; so His Acquirements, being founded and raised upon Injustice, are so far from being a Blessing, that sooner or later they are sure to bring a Curse and Judgment with them in the End, which *like a Canker will eat out, and consume his Estate.*

Upon the whole therefore it may justly be inferred that it is the honest and upright Man only, who will not suffer himself to be biased by any mercenary Views to do the least Base or Unwarrantable Action, that is most likely to meet with Prosperity and Success. He has the Word of God to direct his Steps, the Providence of God to concur with him in his Designs,

and



and the united Favour and good Opinion of Men to forward and assist him in the Prosecution of them. And, though with all these he sometimes misses of his Aim, (as in such a World of Vicissitudes, there's no Method so certain of pursuing any End, but what in the general Course of Human Affairs may sometimes fail of Success) yet as Honesty has always the best Title to it, so it is doubtless the wisest and best Measure, that any Man can take to answer that Purpose.

## S E C T. III.

But there is yet beside this, another Rank of Virtues, that ought never to be left out of the Wiseman's Character, viz. his *Charity* and *Beneficence*, which though they  
seem

seem to make against him in this Argument, are yet as certainly instrumental to his temporal Prosperity as any of the other before-mention'd. *A Good Man is merciful* and benevolent, as well as Righteous and Just, and thinks it as much his Duty to forgive an Injury, to bestow an Alms, and dispense his Bounty to those that need it, as either to be Just, Chaste, or Temperate.

And let no Man fear, that his Honour will be eclips'd, his Estate diminished, or his Funds exhausted by these Methods; but rather reflect and consider with himself, how many have been ruined for the Want of them: What fair Estates, for instance, have been thrown away in contentious Suits, the Owners of which, if they could have put up a little Injury or Loss, might no I

have been Rich and Happy ; How many Friends have been lost, how many Enemies created, by an ill-timed and tenaciousness of Temper, which an Open-handed Bounty, rightly apply'd, would certainly have prevented.

The Wise Man tells us, there is a *Time to spend*, as well as a *Time to spare*, and whenever that Time comes, the Distribution of our Wealth, where the Obligations, either of Nature, Kindred, or Society seem to call for it, is for the most Part a much surer Way to advance a Man's Fortune, and increase his Store, than the most anxious Care of getting and hoarding it up for the most advantageous Purchase that falls within his Reach. So that even in the ordinary Course of Human Affairs, that Remark

of the Wise Man is literally verified, that as *the with-holding more than is meet tendeth to Poverty; so he that scattereth shall yet encrease, the liberal Soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.* Prov. xi. 25.

Nor do these Virtues tend only to the Encrease of *Wealth*, but to the Advancement of a Man's Honour and Reputation in the World. For as Religion is doubtless the Foundation of true Honour; so Honour is a just Debt that is due to Religion, and there are few so profligate, as to refuse to pay it.

The Spirit of Envy and Ill-Nature is apt indeed upon all Occasions, to cast a Mist before Virtue by Calumny and Detraction.---But this is a Mist that is soon dispelled, and then the Religious Man's Character,

like the Sun when it breaks through the Clouds that intercept it, does afterwards shine forth with a more resplendent Brightness. The Reproach he suffers is for the Sake of God's Honour, and God, who never fails to vindicate His Servants, gives Him the Assurance of this Promise, that He *will make His Righteousness as clear as the Light, and His just Dealing as the Noon-Day.*

In short, there is such a Lustre reflected from Piety and Virtue, as does not only strike and attract the Admiration, but wonderfully gains upon the Heart and Affections, and recommends a Man to the Favour and Interest of all that know him. All Ranks of his Acquaintance are for the most Part forward to confide in, and employ him, and, if his Abilities

lities be answerable to his Piety and Virtue, to raise and promote him (which every Age hath afforded us divers Instances of) to the Highest Posts of Dignity and Trust in the Civil, as well as the Ecclesiastical State. But whether he actually attains to it, or not, he has still a just Claim to be honoured for the distinguished Regard he pays to the Principles of the Religion he professes, and his conscientious Discharge of the several Duties it obliges him to; without which Honour is but an empty Name, that neither deserves, nor meets with more than an outward Respect.

Quality and Nobility of Blood, with the Power and Authority that generally attends it, have doubtless many Temporal Advantages in them, which fit Men for Great and Gene-



rous Undertakings, and give them various Opportunities to do much Good in the World; but if such Persons neglect, or abuse these Advantages, by Indolence and Sensuality, or by prostituting their Honour and Power to Base and Impious Actions; if they prove False to God by Licentiousness and Profaneness, or False to Men by Fraud and Oppression; though they have the outward Air of something that looks great; yet having nothing truly Noble or Honourable in themselves, they forfeit all that inward Esteem and Respect of the Mind, which their Quality and Stations would otherwise command. It is the Religious Man only that has a Title to this, or can expect hereafter to reap the Benefit of it, in the future Retribution of a more glorious Reward.

S E C T.

## S E C T. IV.

Having thus fet before you the feveral Outward Bleffings and Advantages of every Kind, that naturally flow from the Exercife of this Divine Wifdom; I now proceed to do Juftice to the laft Branch of the Character the Wife Man has here given of it, *That her Ways are the Ways of Pleafantnefs, and all her Paths are Peace.* In order to which it is previously to be obferved, That, as Man is by Nature a Rational Creature, privy to, and confcious of his own Actions, fo he is always ready to *accufe* as well as *excufe* himfelf, according to their Agreeablenefs or Difagreeablenefs to the ftanding Rules of God's Word by which they are, or ought to be directed.

And



—And the more so upon Account of the due Medium this Principle preserves between two Extremes ; without deviating into either of them, for the Sake of any Temporal Interest and Advantage on the one Hand, or the Fear of any Mischief or Prejudice on the other, to divert or deter him from the due Discharge of his Duty.

This, in short, is the True Principle which every Religious Good Man thinks himself obliged to be actuated by ; and 'tis a Principle so steady and uniform, and consistent with itself, that it never fails of answering the chief and ultimate End proposed by it in a future State.

Whereas that on the contrary, which the Habitual Sinner makes Choice of to conduct himself by, is always various and mutable, and destruc-

destructive of itself;---As being in Effect no better than a vile Compound of several Vices of different Sorts, which are for the most Part opposite to, and incompatible with each other; and must of Course therefore be supposed to create a perpetual Uneasiness in the Sinner's Mind.

Upon this Account it is, with great Justice and *Propriety* observed by the Prophet *Isaiah* li. 20. *That the Wicked are like the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest, whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt.*---The true Construction of which is, that the inward Remorses and Perplexities they are under from the importunate Craving of the several Vices they are enslaved by, are apt to raise such a perpetual Ferment in their Breasts, as will not admit of any real or lasting Enjoyments.-----And what is yet more grievous

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grievous and deplorable is, “ That whilst they are under the customary Dominion of Sin, it is no more in their Power to change their Course of Life, than it is for *the Æthiopian to change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots*, which are natural to them.

S E C T. V.

For this very Reason and Motive it is, that we find all the Moralists in general (Heathens as well as Christians) do universally agree in this important Truth——  
 “ That as there is no true Pleasure or Happiness in this World without the Testimony of a good Conscience; so the only Way to secure and enjoy it, is to abstain from all wilful and presumptuous Sins by endeavouring, as far as our depraved Nature will  
 allow

allow, *to keep our Consciences void of Offence, both towards God and towards Man.*

And how is this to be otherwise effected, but by a regular and religious Observance of the several Duties contained in the two Tables of the Covenant, as they were delivered by God to *Moses* under the Law; and afterwards explained and enlarged upon by Christ himself in his excellent Sermon upon the Mount at the Preaching of the Gospel. All which Duties (as far as the Morality of them reaches) are universally obligatory to all Mankind as such.

But this being an Obligation too extensive and difficult for us to answer (in that depraved State of Nature our first Parents had entailed upon us) without the all-powerful Mediation and Interposal of Christ

the Son of God in our Behalf; he was pleased out of his infinite Compassion and Fellow-feeling of our Infirmities, not only to instruct us in the Nature of the several Branches of the aforesaid Duties, but to enable us by his Grace to discharge them in such a Manner as will entitle them to his Acceptance at his future Tribunal.

It was for this Purpose he first appointed and prescribed that golden Rule of Equity of *Doing as we would be done by*, with Regard to the Love and Charity we owe to one another; which is in all Respects so wisely and exactly adapted to the natural Sentiments and Inclinations of our Fellow Creatures, that it will not with the least Shadow of Reason admit of any Exceptions to palliate or excuse the wilful Transgression of it.

That



That we may not therefore be wanting in our best Endeavours to attain so noble and desirable an End, the most likely Method for every true Christian to take in the private Conduct of his Life; is to accustom himself each Night before he lies down to Sleep to examine into and recollect the several Occurrences and Passages of the preceding Day; to implore God's Pardon for whatever he finds amiss either in his Thoughts, Words, or Deeds, which he knows, or has Reason to fear, will be construed as a Breach of Duty in any of those Respects; with a studious Resolution to guard against it for the future.

By the due Exercise of which Duty, and the Happy Consequences of it, he is sure not only to be at Peace within Himself; but may

safely and securely lay down to take his Rest, without the least Apprehension of any Hazard of his Future State; even tho' God should think fit to call him hence before the next Day dawns, or the Evening Sun sets and closes in upon him.----His Case will then be like that of the *Faithful Servant* in the Gospel, who being ready prepared to meet and attend *his Lord at what Hour soever he came*, was entitled to receive a welcome Euge from him, and in the End to be admitted to enter into his Joy.----*Luke xxv.*

But then since we are not born for ourselves alone, but for the spiritual and temporal Good of the Community whereof we are Members; 'tis farther to be considered, that as we live in a State of Dependence upon one another, and are  
under

under mutual Obligations in the several Ranks and Stations of Life that Providence has placed us in, to contribute what lies in our Power to the publick Welfare and Interest and Support of the whole.-----So there are relative Duties incumbent upon all under their Care and Charge ; which those of a superior Rank and Power above the Rest (whether Magistrates or Masters, Parents or Guardians) are in Conscience obliged by the natural Laws of civil Societies to put in Execution, that they may not themselves become accountable to God for their wilful Neglect of it.

How nearly then does it concern all such Parents and Masters in particular not only to instill the true Principles of Piety and Religion into the Minds of their Children and Servants, and other Dependants upon them,

but



but also to reprove, correct, and punish the wilfull Transgressors of them, as the Nature of their Crimes deserves.

And what other Method can be thought of more suitable and efficacious to this important End, than the regular and constant Exercise of such Forms of Family Prayers and Devotions, as they think most fit for that Use?-----A Duty, (which how little soever it has of late Years been reduced to Practice) has ever been esteemed in all former Ages as one of the best Preservatives against that impetuous Flow of Infidelity and Licentiousness, that in the Opinion of the best and wisest Men amongst us, are in a great Measure imputed to the notorious Neglect of it.

From this double View of the Case, and the different Consequences  
of

of it in each of these Respects, 'tis natural and obvious to infer what heavy Judgments and Punishments the Libertine Householder (under whose Roof the Name of Christ is blasphemed, his Laws despis'd, and his Worship neglected) must be exposed to, on the one Hand,----And what gracious Promises of Bliss and Happiness are sure to attend the true Christian on the other, in *the Life that now is, as well as that which is to come.* The Truth and Certainty of both which Sanctions, and the proper Application of them to the present Purpose, being fully and distinctly recorded in Holy Writ, I need only appeal to the Divine Authority of the Book of *Deutronomy*, where they are delivered by *Moses* from the Mouth of God himself, and that in the most solemn and pa-

c

thetic Terms that can possibly be expressed ; as more particularly appears in the 28th Chapter of the said Book, which together with the many well known Precepts and Admonitions frequently mentioned in the New Testament to the like Effect, I take leave to recommend to the pious Reader's Perusal for his farther Satisfaction therein.

#### S E C T. V.

From all which it is beyond Contradiction evident, that as Peace and Happiness is the natural Effect and Consequence of a religious Life, and has the same solemn Promises in the Divine Word of the like Blessings, in the present, as well as in the future State ; so the same Conclusion

is

is equally applicable to both; viz.  
 “ That whoever makes it his Chief  
 Endeavour in the General Course  
 and Conduct of his Life conscientiously to discharge his Duty to God upon Earth, cannot fail of being at Peace, and happy with him in Heaven.

Nor is he less secure of being likewise at Peace with his Fellow-Christians here below, to whose Favour and Friendship he may well be supposed to recommend himself by all the Neighbourly, Humane, and Beneficent Offices he has been ready when any proper Occasions offer'd, to assist and oblige them with;-----  
 And (what comes yet nearer to the Spirituality of the Gospel) by his charitable pardoning and forgiving of all injuries or Affronts, and after the Example of our Blessed Lord

H h                      endeavour-

endeavouring in like manner *to overcome Evil with Good*.---Upon all which Motives and Considerations it is that we are with great Justice and Propriety assured by the Prophet *Isaiab*, xxxii. 17. in the Name of God himself; That *the Work of Righteousness is Peace, and the Effect of Righteousness Quietness and Assurance for ever*.

But as these Temporal Effects are only the Forerunners, the previous Marks and Tokens of that eternal Peace and Happiness, which are to be the *Portion of just Men made perfect* in another World: so they are far short of that consummate State of Bliss and Glory which God *has reserved for all those that truly love and obey him*; who (as a certain Consequence of this) will then be admitted to the unspeakable Happiness of the Beatifick Vision in Heaven, where they  
will

will *see God Face to Face* in his utmost Splendor and Glory, enjoy the Blessed Society of an innumerable Company of Angels and Spirits above, and live forever with them in Christ's Heavenly Kingdom.

The Conclusion therefore that naturally arises from the Whole, must be;----That, since this Divine Wisdom, as it denotes Religion, is so perfective of our Rational Nature, and carries it's own Reward along with it, not only in this Life, but in that which is to come (as under the several Heads before mention'd I have endeavour'd to prove it does) How forcibly does this engage us all to keep strictly to the Rules prescribed by it, in the Direction and Conduct of our Principles and Actions to that End? And how inexcusable must be the Condemnation



of those Nominal Christians among us, who, quite contrary to their Profession, forfeit all the Happiness they would otherwise have a Claim to, by an Obstinate Aversion and Opposition to it?

A Way of acting so absolutely contradictory to the Principles of Human Reason, and even to those of Self-Love and Self-Preservation, which the Law of Nature has, in an especial Manner, impressed upon all Mankind; that there must surely be some other Extraordinary Motive they are unwilling to own, which insensibly induces them to be reconciled to it. They must either be infatuated and deluded by the Spirit of Darkness, (who lies in wait to deceive) or be drawn into it by the corrupt Communications of those who are unhappily under the like Influence,



Influence, to deny or call in Question the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, and the Certainty of a Future State.

For as 'tis hardly possible to conceive how that could be effected, if there was not a Root of Infidelity lurking in the Heart, to allure and excite them to it; so it must be this, and this alone that can reasonably be supposed to work them up to such a fool-hardy Resolution, as to hazard their Future State upon so precarious a Bottom, or make them in any Measure easy under so open and daring a Contempt of God, and his Laws.

Nor is there any other End or Purpose they can be presumed to propose by it, unless it be to rid themselves of the Obligations they are under in the Christian State, to  
part

part with, or lay a Restraint upon their darling Lufts and Vices, which, in their present Way of judging and acting, seem to them more defireable than even Heaven itself.

I might here again remind these unhappy Gentlemen of the dangerous Risque they must inevitably run, by the unpardonable Obstinacy they are guilty of, in their wilfull rejecting that Sacred Key of Divine Truth and Knowledge, which alone can open and lead the Way to it.

-----But after the many Arguments and Solutions that have been urg'd in the Preliminary Dissertation on that Head, it will be sufficient to refer them to the farther Consideration thereof.

All I have more to add to what has been already said, is only

**DIVINE WISDOM. 247**

ly to crave the Reader's Patience for the Perusal of the following Address, in which there are several Particulars, which were omitted in the former Edition.



**A N**



A N  
Affectionate Address  
TO THE  
DEISTS and FREE-THINKERS,  
WITH THE  
*Most pressing and perswasive Motives  
and Exhortations to excite their  
Conversion, and re-establish them  
in the Christian Faith.*



O make these Exhortations more Effectual, it will be necessary to search and probe to the Bottom of the Sore, and lay it open to full View, in order to a Cure. An Operation as Irksome and Disagreeable to Me, as it can be to Themselves. But as the  
Weighty

Weighty Cause of Divine Truth needs no Apology for the most earnest and zealous Endeavours to defend it ; so the probable Prospect of gaining some Profelytes to it (however few they be) where Eternity lies at stake, will at least, I hope, bespeak their Candour, and entitle me to their Excuse. The only Apology that seems necessary for me to make is, that the same, or similar Arguments, often interfering with what had before been urged (under the several Views I thought myself obliged to set them in) has casually occasion'd some Verbal Tautologies, that could not be avoided, without maiming the Sense and Energy of them, which pleads for itself,

## S E C T. I.

This premised, the first Thing I have to exhort them to is, that they would in Earnest duly reflect and consider with themselves, what a Number of Irreparable Mischiefs, the bare Licentiousness in Point of Morality must unavoidably do ; not only to the Cause and Interest of Religion in general, but to the Publick Good of the Civil Community, both in Church and State. They cannot but allow, with the Rest of Mankind, that Peace and Unity (in which the Grace of Charity is always implied) are the Fundamental Support of all Established Politics and Governments in the World, upon which their real Welfare and Prosperity must necessarily depend.

And

And how inconsistent these are with the open Contempt and Violation of the several Duties of our Holy Religion, as also with the Factionous Contests and Disputes perpetually raised about it; and consequently how destructive they must mutually be of each other, is too evidently experienc'd to be denied.----- Witness the transcient Specimen given of them in the Practical Remarks before made on the Attribute of *Holiness*.

—And if Vice and Immorality, singly considered, have so visible a Tendency that Way, how much more must those Libertine Principles, which strike at the very Root of Christianity itself, be attended with these pernicious and deplorable Effects?



But what yet farther enhances the Guilt of this heavy Charge is, that the unhappy Persons therein concerned, not content with the Liberty of harbouring these Infidel Opinions in their own Breasts, are every where so industriously zealous to spread and promote them among others; which, by their Agreeableness to the Corrupt Humours and Passions of Mankind, they appear, alas! to be too successful in. If they could, indeed, be assured, that they are really in the Right, and have Truth on their Side, they might in some Measure be excused for being so zealous in that Respect; But when Nothing of this does, or can ever be made appear; when they have Nothing but bare Imagination and Conjecture on their Side, one would hardly think it possible, that Men  
of

of Parst and Abilities, Learning and Judgment, (as there are many of them allowed to be in other Matters) should take so much Pains to defend, and propagate them upon any other Motives than those I have before-mentioned.

To take off the Imputation of so heavy a Charge, it greatly behoves me in the next Place, to exhort and entreat them, in the most tender, compassionate, and charitable Manner I can, to search and examine thoroughly into the true State of their Case, as it has been here represented; That they would set aside the Bias and Prejudice of the Self-sufficiency of their own Understanding, and weigh impartially the many flagrant and undeniable Evidences and Attestations of the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures to that great  
End.

End.——An Examination so necessary, and at the same Time so satisfactory in itself, that, if they could but be perswaded to make a right Use of it, in the Conscientious and Self-denying Manner here proposed, they could not well fail of being convinced of the Inexcusable Obstinacy they are guilty of in persisting to withstand the Force and Efficacy of them.

Especially if they would, at the same Time, likewise consider, that these Evidences for the Truth and Certainty of them, with Regard to the Doctrinal Points, as well as the Historical Facts therein recorded, have stood the Test of all Ages since the first Publication of them, and even of the Providence of God Himself, which has so wonderfully guarded and preserved them through all the

the outrageous Persecutions from Time to Time raised against them by the Heathen Nations, which were inverately bent to suppress and destroy them.

## S E C T. II.

If Truth be really what they aim at, and do in earnest seek after, let such of them, as are in any Degree qualified for it, but take the Pains to look into and examine those ancient and authentick Writings of *Josephus* and *Philo Judæus* (the most Learned and Celebrated Authors among the *Jews* at that Time) and they will there find such ample and satisfactory Accounts, with regard to the Life and Doctrine of Christ, and the Miracles wrought by him; as well as that of *Moses*, and the Di-

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vine Dispensation he was commanded and inspired by God to promulge; as may justly be presum'd sufficient to convince them of the Unreasonableness of their groundless Prejudices and Exceptions against them.

And so again, as to the Historical Matters of Fact, which relate to the several Prophecies therein revealed concerning Christ, many Hundred Years before they came to pass; If they would only give themselves the like Trouble attentively to read over and consider the apparent *Connection* there is between the Sacred and Profane Histories on that Head, (the Chronology of which has been published by several noted Authors, more particularly by Archbishop *Usher*, and the late Learned and Judicious Dr. *Prideaux*, the most accurate and valuable of them) they  
would

would there find such full Satisfaction in these *Points also*, as, in the Impartial Way of Judging, it would be next to impossible for them to gain-say or withstand.

But lest this should be thought too difficult and tedious an Enquiry for them to enter into (as I am apt to believe it may) they will the more easily, I hope, excuse the Freedom I take to refer them to the two Prefatory Discourses drawn up by the late Acute, Laborious, and Judicious Mr. *Stackhouse*, before his *History of the Holy Bible*.----In which [besides the many Powerful and Convincing Arguments for the Necessity as well as the Reasonableness and Expediency of a Divine Revelation in general; and the no less full and satisfactory Answers to all the Objections that have ever yet been rais'd against

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them]



them] I dare venture to promise they will there meet with such authentick Proofs and Testimonies, not only from the ancient Jewish, but the most noted Roman Writers and Historians of those Times, in Confirmation of the several Facts therein recorded; That they can no more be denied or disputed, than that there were in Truth such Authors, or such Facts and Passages then transacted in the World.

All which will yet more fully appear, if they take in the Evidence of the Publick Written Account which, *Tacitus* expressly tells us, was sent to *Tiberius Cæsar*, of all those Matters from *Pontius Pilate* the Governour himself; who by the violent Importunity of the *Jews* (as he then complained) was forc'd, against the Bent of his own Mind and Judgment,



ment, to execute that unjust Sentence he had pass'd upon our Saviour, *as they required.*

### S E C T. III.

Taking the Whole, therefore, in this View, what other Judgment can be pass'd upon such a prevalent Growth of Infidelity amongst us, but that the chief Abettors of it, are for the most Part so absolutely determined (right or wrong) to adhere to their own Opinions, that instead of *seeing with their Eyes, or bearing with their Ears*, they resolve to close both; and reject the Offers of that happy Conversion they might otherwise be blessed with?

And what makes this Absurdity yet more unaccountable, is, that, notwithstanding the High Value they

set upon Human Reason, above every other Principle they will suffer themselves to be guided by; yet their Way of acting in this Case is a downright Contradiction to it. For what in Fact or Reality can be more so, than to prefer *Darkness* before *Light*, to quit *Certainty* for *Uncertainty*, and run the Hazard of a Future State upon so great an Inequality of Evidence, as the Testimony of an Omniscent *God* on the one Hand, and that of *Fallen Man* supposes on the other?

But admitting the Evidences were in any Degree Equal in Regard to to that great Point, (which no Wise and Considerate Person, after all the Calculations that have ever been made about it, can allow it to be): Yet, considering the Infinite Rewards and Punishments that are here-  
after

after to ensue, as no Man living can be assured they will not, which, when brought into this Account, must greatly preponderate and cast the Balance of the Scale against them; —What a Madness must it be to venture upon such an Experiment, as has no probable Grounds in Right Reason to support it?

This is what they themselves must needs be sensible of, and therefore to supply the Defect of Rational Arguments, which the Weakness of their Cause will not bear, they have Recourse to that Old Heathen, and (if I may be pardoned the Word) Hellish Device of *Scoffing* and *Ridicule* to *that End*; finding it much easier and more effectual to Laugh Men out of their Christian Principles, than to Reason them into their Own: So unjustifiable a Way of proceeding, and so dangerous

dangerous and pernicious in the Consequences of it, that it is not easy to account for the encouraging Success they meet with in it.

But whether it is owing to Pride or Self-Conceit and Singularity on the one Hand ; or a natural Bashfulness and Diffidence in their own Judgment, and Dependence upon those whom they esteem as more Learned and Knowing on the other ;---or all these mixed together with the common Foible of the Love of the World, and the present Modes and Interests and Enjoyments of it, certain it is, that as there's no one thing Mankind has a greater Aversion to than to be *Mocked* and *Derided* ; so nothing has done greater Mischief to all Religion whatsoever, than this has brought upon it.

Especially

Especially when it is considered what an Additional Load of Guilt it must bring upon those unhappy Persons, who *fit in the Scorners's Chair*, and draw in all that come within their Reach to assemble and unite with them in such Impious Communications. For what can possibly be more Injurious and Provoking to the Divine Being than to see his Deity thus insulted, and his Divine Laws made the Subject of Burlesque and Ridicule? What more inconsistent with the Nature of Rational Creatures, than to imagine him capable of suffering the Souls of Men, which Christ shed his Precious Blood to redeem, to be so little regarded by them as this implies, without inflicting the severest Punishments upon them for it? No, these are Outrages so shocking to all true Christians Ears  
in

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in the very Mention of them, that they cannot but raise the greatest Horror and Detestation in their Minds against them.

And they would, no doubt, have the like Effect on these very Scoffers themselves, if they could possibly be prevailed with to read the Scriptures, with that Attention and Sincerity as they ought; and seriously reflect on the many Severe Threatnings there denounced in particular against this heinous Transgression.--- The most remarkable of which is that recorded by the Wise-man from the Mouth of God himself, *Prov. i. 26, 27, 28.* where he tells the Libertines of this sort in those Days, that *because they bated Knowledge, set at nought his Counsels, and despised his Reproofs; He would laugh at their Calamity, and mock when their*  
*fear*

*Fear came ; and again, That when Distress and Anguish came upon them as a Whirlwind, and threatened their Destruction ; Then, says he, shall they call upon me, but I will not answer, they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me ; yea, though they make many Prayers, I will not bear them.*

#### S E C T. IV.

That these severe Denunciations were actually executed upon the Jewish Nation in General, is too evidently demonstrated by their utter Banishment and Dispersion through the whole Christian World to need any further Proof.----And, if we (notwithstanding our Christian Profession) do still go on, by the like notorious Acts of Infidelity. Im



piety, and Licentiousness, to *fill up the Measure of our Iniquities* as they did ; we have, I fear, but too much Reason to expect the like severe Sentence of Condemnation from Him ; and how soon that may be passed upon us, God alone, who is the Avenger, as well as the Witness of them, can possibly know, or determine on that Account.

The sensible Warnings we have felt of the Divine Indignation against us, in the last Century by a long Expensive and Destructive Civil War, in which many Millions of Lives in the Field, and *even that of the Best of Princes upon the Scaffold at his own Gate were sacrificed to the Ambition of a Tyrannical Usurper, whose Sword was the only Law he resolved to govern by*,---And, as a fatal Consequence of this, the utter *Subversion*

*sion* of our happy Establishment both in Church and State ; together with the many detestable and deplorable Effects that naturally flowed from it ;  
 ---Are *Inflictions* too flagrant and fresh in our Memories to need being reminded of ; and of too grievous a Nature to bear being reflected on without perpetuating that ignominious Reproach and Condemnation, which the desperate Rebels of those Days brought upon the whole Nation by it.

Nor is this the only Instance of God's Displeasure against us ; there being yet another of a much fresher Date, which I cannot forbear taking Notice of on this Occasion ;----*viz.* That malignant Distemper and Mortality among our Cattle, that we have for some Years groaned under and are not yet intirely free from ; which

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appears to be a Visitation of so extraordinary a Nature, that it is as much above the Reach of our Reason to account for, as it is beyond our utmost Skill in Physical Causes and Effects, by any Human Means to remedy or prevent.

To whom then are we to ascribe this surprizing Event, or from whom are we to hope for Succour and Relief, but that supreme Almighty Being, on whose Providence alone such unaccountable Emergencies must be supposed to depend?

This may, for ought we know, be but the *Beginning of other Sorrows* yet to come; if we do not take due Care by a speedy Repentance and Reformation of Life, to put a Stop to these spreading *Evils*.

But to comfort us under such judicial Trials, which last no longer than

than the great and wise End they were designed for is answered; 'tis farther to be observed, that as God was graciously pleased on the former Occasion, *in the Midst of Judgment to remember Mercy*, and by giving a different Turn to the Course of his Providence in our Favour, to restore our then banished Sovereign to the Rightful Possession of his Throne, under the same Form of Government in Church and State, which was so happily before settled and established among us ;-----So we have great Reason to hope for the like gracious Favour in Regard to the Malady we have so long complained of ; especially after the repeated solemn Acts of Humiliation and Repentance appointed by his present Majesty on that Account ; and the strict Regard he has  
all

all along shewed to the standing Rules of Justice and Equity, as well as to the Peace and Prosperity of the Civil Government over which he presides: these being all of them Qualifications of so distinguished a Nature as may well be presumed to entitle him to the Divine Favour of God himself, as they have hitherto done, to the general Affection, Respect and Esteem of all his Subjects, who never fail to testify the Sincerity of it, by their best Wishes and Prayers for his Preservation, as in Duty and Gratitude he justly deserves from them.

It is but too common indeed with the Generality of Free-Thinkers (who are disposed to resolve all publick Events of this Kind into the Power and Energy of natural Causes only) to exclaim against our ascribing them to  
the



the Dispensations of God's Providence, which they falsely imagine to be an Impeachment of His Infinite Justice and Goodness to Mankind, and consequently inconsistent with the Essential Ideas he has been pleas'd to give us of himself in his Divine Word.-----But this is an Inference that ought by no Means to be drawn from it. For though it cannot be denied that all National Judgments and Punishments as such, are and must be, indiscriminately inflicted on all alike, in a temporal Sense (with regard to the present Life): Yet, as God is an all-discerning, as well as a Righteous Judge, who sees and knows the Fidelity and Integrity of those that truly believe and trust in him; so he will not fail to reward them with a due Share of that spiritual and eternal

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nal Happiness, they have a just Title to be admitted to in another World.

## S E C T. V.

Having now enlarged much farther upon this nice and sublime Subject than I first intended, or than probably may be acceptable to some of my Readers; it is now high Time to return to the general Head I had entered into under the former Section, *viz.* To shew the solemn Assurances we have from God himself in all Parts of his Divine Word; that he is not only infinite in Power to *punish*, but *abundant in Mercy* and Compassion to forgive the greatest of Sinners, if with penitent and contrite Hearts, they return to their Duty, so that the very Scorners before-mentioned



before-mentioned, if they would but be prevailed with (as King *Solomon* advices) to be *wise for themselves* and be moved by those awful Admonitions to reform and forsake that grievous Enormity before it be too late; there is yet a Way left for them to escape, and be reconciled to Him.----And that without their seeking Shelter under some mistaken Passages in *St. Paul's* Epistles, which they vainly imagine to be much more in their Favour, than they will find them to be.

It is true, indeed, that *St. Paul* himself, before his Conversion was excited by his great Zeal for the Mosaick Dispensation, to become a *Blasphemer and Persecutor* of the Name and Faith of Christ. But he tells *he obtained Mercy, because he did ignorantly in Unbelief.* 1<sup>st</sup> i.

---And the like Apology he makes in Favour of the Gentiles also on that Account; *How should they believe, says he, in Him of whom they have not heard, and how should they hear without a Teacher, and how should they teach except they be sent?*

Rom. x. 14, 15.

And agreeably to this it is farther to be observed,---That, though the Jews were severely punished for their Rejecting and Crucifying the Blessed Messiah, who was sent to deliver to them the *glad Tidings of the Gospel*; by being driven out of their native Country to seek their Bread in foreign Nations, under the odious Mark of Ignominy and Reproach to this Day;---As the greatest Part of the Gentiles still are, by being involved in a State of Darkness and Ignorance of that Divine  
Light

Light; and enslaved to the Cruel Tyranny and Opression of the Savage Rulers they are forced to be subject to;-----yet they are neither of them to be looked upon as downright *Reprobates so as to be without Hope, and without God in the World.*

For as the former have the Law of *Moses* for the Rule of their Faith and Conduct, and the latter that of natural Reason and Conscience to regulate their Thoughts and Actions by, so they are each of them to be rewarded or punished hereafter, according to their Observance or Violation of those Laws, by which they are to be judged;-----And that in such Kinds and Degrees of each, as God in his Infinite Wisdom and Justice thinks fit to allot them in a future State; though he has not

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been pleased expressly to reveal them to us in his Divine Word.

To confirm the Truth of which Assertions we have the Testimony of the Holy Scriptures, more particularly of the *New Testament* in several Places, which plainly intimate and foretell the *Conversion* of the One, and *the Calling* in of the Other; and that *when the Fullness of Time* appointed by the Father for that Purpose is compleated; all that then *remain alive of them*, shall, by embracing the Faith of Christ, be admitted into the Pale of his Church, *become one Fold under one Shepherd*; and through the Merits of his Death and Passion be entitled to the Everlasting Reward of it at his future Tribunal.

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## S E C T. VI.

But of what Ufe or Benefit is all this to the Free-Thinkers of this Age among us, who have not the least Claim to the foregoing Pleas? If the Light of Christ's Gospel had not been vouchsafed and imparted to them; if they had not entered into a solemn Covenant with Him at their Baptism, and been early instructed in its Doctrines and Precepts by the publick Preaching of it; they might have something favourable to plead for themselves:---But, as their Case is quite the Reverse of all this, so must the Effect and Consequence of it be too; they become much more inexcusable by their outward Profession of Christianity, and therefore render themselves obnoxious



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noxious to much a severer Condem-  
nation.

A Consequence of so shocking and dreadful a Nature, that they themselves can hardly be supposed to reflect upon it without frequent Fears and Apprehensions of the Divine Judgments in another Life; some secret Fore-bodings will unavoidably be rising in their Minds of the Probability of a future State, ---And what else in Point of Equity, can they then expect at God's Hand, but to be made the Signal Examples of his Divine Justice for so impious a Contempt and Abuse of his Mercy, which he has from Time to Time vouchsafed them the gracious Offers of?

*'Tis little better* in the Effect and Consequences of it, than an implicit Sort of Calling upon God *to de-*  
*part*

*part from them for they desire not the Knowledge of his Ways*; and setting his Threatnings at Defiance, as mere Bug-bears invented to frighten the Timid and Credulous Christians into the Observance of his Laws.

But what yet further shews that malicious Pains they are taking to abolish the Christian Religion; they scruple not (without considering whose Work they are employed in) to become Tools and Instruments in the Jesuits Hands to bring about their main Design, of subverting our established Church and re-instituting that of the Church of *Rome* in its stead, which is more than probable would be the Consequence of it. For there is nothing more obvious to common Sense and Observation, than that the Growth and Increase of Popery, is and must of  
Course



Course be advanced in Proportion to the Growth of Infidelity and Impiety amongst us.-----Their false Doctrines will not bear the Test of the primitive Truth and Purity of the Gospel; and, as they think themselves obliged to be of some Religion or other, 'tis natural for them to make Choice of that Church, which calls itself Infallible, and proposes much easier and surer Terms of Salvation (than they will allow Ours to do) by their pretended *Works of Supererogation* and *Prayers for the Dead*, to release them from that Purgatorial State, they are supposed to be confin'd to, in order to purify and prepare them for that perfect State of Bliss and Glory they are to enjoy with Christ in Heaven. That this is the Opinion too generally entertain'd amongst them, appears from the grievous Complaints we find

find (of late Years more than ever) set forth in our publick Papers of the great Numbers of professed Protestants, which crowd to the several Romish Chapels they are at Liberty to resort to without Restraint or Controul.

But not to dwell any longer on so disagreeable a Subject (which I have not Room for) there is nothing in Truth can be more surprizingly absurd than that Men of such distinguished Parts and Abilities should industriously associate and combine together to subvert the Faith and Doctrine of Christ's Gospel, upon which all true Morality and Religion is founded; as they are in Effect endeavouring to do, by throwing down the Chief Guards and Fences appointed by God to secure and preserve it.

For what in Nature can be more evident to the common Sentiments of Mankind, than that the Stability of all Superstructures must depend on the Strength and Security of the Foundation that supports them? And how should that Security be made good in this Respect, if every Man be left at Liberty to think and act as he pleases, without any Regard to that Divine Law?---He becomes then, in a moral Sense, *a Law to himself*, as having nothing but his own depraved Fancy and Inclination to govern himself by; and what the Consequence of that must be, his own Experience in the End will too fatally convince him of.

## S E C T. VII.

That *Religion* in general is, and must be, of all Things, the most proper and necessary to the publick Interest and Prosperity of all Civil States and Governments whatever, is a known and received Maxim, which the most eminent Politicians of all Ages and Nations have universally agreed in ;---and that the *Christian Religion* in particular (especially as 'tis here established) is, of all others, the most effectual to the Attainment of that important End; we have likewise the concurrent Opinion of two late Authors of great Note and Distinction on the Infidel Side, to confirm the Truth of it ;---(who, notwithstanding the manifest Contrariety it bears to their

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professed

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professed Disbelief of future Rewards and Punishments in another World) are both forced to acknowledge the powerful Influence it has, in Point of Policy, to promote Men's Obedience to the Precepts of the moral Law, as well as to restrain them from the Commission of such enormous and malignant Vices, as they would otherwise be inclined to run headlong into.

From all which it may, I hope, by their own Confession, be very fairly inferred ; that since the unjustifiable Methods they take to propagate their Infidel Principles are such, as have never yet been (and I trust in God never will be) able to effect ;-----they would forbear at least to blaspheme what they own is above the Reach of their Reason to comprehend, and, with a modest  
and

and becoming Deference, be persuaded to acquiesce (as their Wise Fore-fathers had for many Ages done) in that standing and authentic Revelation God has vouchsafed us of his Divine Will therein.

This no Doubt would be the safest Way for them to take in their Case, as not knowing how far his Divine Mercy may possibly be extended, by some extraordinary Impulses of his Divine Spirit upon their Minds to *bring them back to the Belief and Acknowledgment of the Truth.*

But however that may be, as it can be no Reproach upon their Understandings to entertain some *Hopes* at least of that Kind; so the Infinite Happiness that would assuredly attend the fulfilling of those Hopes, would abundantly justify them in making

making that Experiment; and be the likeliest Means to induce them *to cast off those Works of Darkneſs*, that have hitherto intercepted that Divine Light of the Goſpel, which would otherwiſe have ſhined upon them in their reading of it.

Of what Weight, theſe preſſing Arguments and Exhortations may, or ought to be, with the *profefſed Infidels* before-mentioned, is a Point of Conſcience, that muſt be left entirely to themſelves to judge of, and determine.----All I have further to offer on this Head is only to ſubjoin a few practical Remarks, by Way of Caution, to thoſe other Gentlemen, called *Free-Thinkers*, who have not yet quite abandoned the Profeſſion of Chriſt's Goſpel, tho' they cannot be brought to aſſent to, or  
comply



comply with the true Principles and Precepts of it.

The most important of which is, That, however disagreeable these may be to their private Sentiments and Inclinations in some Respects; yet as the strict Obligations they are under in their Political Capacities to preserve the Peace, Happiness, and Interest of the Community they appertain to, are equally binding to all its Members; so the bare mention thereof is sufficient to claim a general Assent to it.

The Natural Love that every Man is supposed to have for his own Native Country, as well as the Pleasure and Satisfaction of being useful and serviceable to All on any just Occasion that call for his Advice and Assistance; Are all such forcible and  
engaging

engaging Motives to this End, as cannot in common Sense and Reason be declined or withstood.—Nor can any Occasion whatever more necessary and important be possibly thought of, than that of defending and promoting the firm Belief and due Observance of the Gospel Dispensation, which has through this whole Treatise been over and over again Proved to be in all Respects the only perfect Rule of Faith and Righteousness, that ever was, or can be transmitted to Mankind.

In as much as our very Lives and Fortunes, as well as our Liberties and Properties, which we are all so jealous of, and solicitous to preserve (if not guarded and secured by the All-wise Precepts and Sanctions of it) would lie at the Mercy of every Cruel, Revengefull, or Fraudulent Oppressor,

Oppressor, that has it in his Power to invade, assault, or rob us, when he pleases.-----And what a wretched State Human Nature would be reduced to in such a Case, is a Thought attended with too much Horror and Dread to be ever entertained among us ; or to need any other Argument to dissuade us from giving Way to any Thing that appears to have the least Tendency to it.

All I have further to add by Way of Close to the whole, is to apologize for the Freedom I have here taken with them, and earnestly to exhort and entreat them once more, that they would seriously and impartially ponder and reflect, (again and again) on the imminent Danger of their present State-----That they would with Candour and Pa-

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tience duly weigh the several Arguments and Admonitions I have here endeavoured to set before them in different Lights, for their clearer View and Satisfaction therein. -----

And that they would be at least persuaded to believe that, as the main End I aimed at throughout was to convince them, if possible, of the manifest Absurdity of the fatal Errors they have hitherto been involved in, and dissuade them from persisting any longer in them; so I know of nothing that would give me greater Pleasure and Comfort in this Life, than my being in any Degree instrumental to their Conversion, and bringing them to a right Sense of that infinite Happiness they might thereby be assured of Enjoying in the Life to come.

I pray

I pray God vouchsafe a Blessing on this well-meant Essay towards it, and make it successful, as far as it reaches, to that Great and Desirable End intended by it, The Salvation of their Souls in the Day of the Lord Jesus.

F I N I S.



## E R R A T A.

**I**N the Preface, Page 2, Line 20, read *thoroughly*. p. 6. l. 2, r. *salutary*. p. 7, l. 21, r. *Discourse* instead of *Dissertation*.

In the Dissertation, p. 6, l. 13, r. *Incogitancy*. p. 20, l. 21, dele *the*. p. 23, l. 14, dele *of*. p. 37, l. 9, instead of *other*, r. *of them*. p. 55, l. 2, r. *Pofterity*. p. 58, l. 6, r. *circumscribed*. p. 81, l. 4, r. *Quantity* instead of *Quality*. p. 96, l. 4, r. *Evil*. p. 119, in the last Line, r. *Justice* instead of *Power*. p. 123, l. 7, dele *not*. p. 130, l. 6, r. *Ἠγούμενα*. p. 132, l. 2, r. *appears*. p. 136, l. 16, r. *Transgression*. p. 155, l. 22, r. *Offentation*. p. 161, l. 2, r. *presumptuous*. p. 167, l. 13, r. *bear*. p. 168, l. 22, r. *Parricide*. p. 178, l. 2, r. *Spiritual*. p. 195, l. 12, dele *the*. p. 224, l. 4, before the word *and* r. *Thrift*. p. 236, l. 15, instead of *Luke*, r. *Matthew xxv. 21*. p. 240, r. *Sett.* *VI.* p. 241, l. 20, r. *Cbaritable*. p. 253, l. 1, r. *Parti*. p. 255, l. 4, r. *inveterately*. p. 268, l. 13, r. *Emergencies*. p. 268, last l. r. *judicial*. p. 273, l. 3, r. *advifes*. p. 275, l. 2, r. *Oppreffion*. p. 278, l. 1, r. *a* before *much*. p. 282, l. 12, instead of *a moral*, read *a literal Senfe*. p. 284, l. 17, r. *they* after *as*.













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